

Multidimensional Poverty Analysis

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



Table of Content

Table of Content.....	2
1. Executive Summary	3
1.1. Introduction.....	3
1.2. Background and Approach.....	3
1.3 Data Gaps and Challenges.....	4
1.4 Overview of the Main Poverty Indicators	4
1.4 Who is Living in Poverty?.....	6
2. The Context – Why are People Poor in DRC?	7
2.1 Economic and Social Context	7
2.2 Political and Institutional Context	12
2.3 Peace an Conflict Context	14
2.4 Environmental Context.....	17
3. Dimensions of Poverty – How are People Poor?	20
3.1 Resources.....	20
3.2 Opportunities and Choice	23
3.3 Power and Voice	27
3.4 Human Security.....	30
4. Conclusions	32
4.1 The Binding Constraints to end Poverty	32
4.2 Concluding Remarks	36
List of References.....	38
Annex 1: Binding constraints	45

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Introduction

This document analyses the current poverty situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through the Swedish Development Cooperation's (Sida) approach to multidimensional poverty. The MDPA aims to contribute to a more effective and relevant poverty alleviation strategy by defining a shared understanding of poverty while also considering both the current realities and Sida's development goals.

To reach the ambitious sustainable development goal "to end poverty in all its forms everywhere" a concerted effort will be required. Poverty is multifaceted and complex, affecting women, men, girls, and boys in all their diversity in different ways at different times and may be perceived differently depending on the socio-political and historical context. Understanding and acting on this complexity is one major challenge to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda. Analysing the dimensions of Poverty in the DRC; is part of Sida's contribution to this challenge.

Sweden is the one of the largest developments donors in the DRC, in 2023 the Swedish Embassy in Kinshasa disbursed 552 000 M SEK in development support, and 367 000 M SEK in humanitarian support, and additional support coming from regional and global strategies to the DRC for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Sweden (\$85 million in humanitarian aid and development cooperation) is the third largest bilateral donor after the United States (\$732 million) and Germany (\$398 million), followed by the United Kingdom in fourth place (\$42 million).¹ Sweden is thus the second largest donor in the EU after Germany. In 2023, Sweden was the 3rd largest bilateral development donor and the 5th largest humanitarian donor in the DRC², after the US, ECHO, CERF³ and Germany.⁴

1.2. Background and Approach

The Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) by the Swedish Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Congo was last conducted in 2018, with an updated version in 2020. This 2024 version of the MDPA builds on results from previous processes and data collected from strategic actors and internal workshops, the main purpose is to gain a better understanding of the current situation while also examining the historical perspective for strategic engagement to achieve the SDGs across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

Moreover, the main purpose of this analysis is to inform the new strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with the DR Congo. The MDPA process includes various sub-analyses that helps to inform the annual strategy plans in the DRC and also takes into account other key stakeholder reports.

¹ International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). *Congo (the Democratic Republic of the)*. 2023. D-portal. https://d-portal.org/ctrack.html?country_code=CD&year_max=2023#view=donors

² OCHA. *République Démocratique du Congo Plan de Réponse Humanitaire*. 2023. <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1113/summary>

³ United Nation's Central Emergency Response Fund, to which Sweden also contributes (third largest donor in 2023) <https://cerf.un.org/>. 2023.

⁴ OCHA. *République Démocratique du Congo Plan de Réponse Humanitaire*. 2023. [République Démocratique du Congo Plan de Réponse Humanitaire 2023 | Financial Tracking Service](#)

The MDPA process has been driven by team members with expertise in a range of thematic areas within the cooperation section at The Embassy of Sweden in Kinshasa and has been conducted with a participatory and iterative approach, primarily with key stakeholders and partners in the DRC, it has also involved colleagues at the Embassy and at Sida headquarters (HQ).

The process has included stakeholder meetings in Lubumbashi, Bukavu, Kananga and Kinshasa, and numerous workshops at the Embassy in Kinshasa during the period September 2023 to February 2024. Colleagues from Sida HQ have also been involved in the entire process through actor meetings, internal workshops, and by providing guidance and technical assistance throughout the process, from data collection, data analysis, and report writing. The MDPA itself is a learning process for all team members of the cooperation and ensures that the perspectives of people living in poverty in the DRC is better understood and taken into consideration in our work within Sida.

During the data collection phase over 100 individuals were consulted, covering actors from national and international civil society, government, multilateral partners and other bilateral donors.

1.3 Data Gaps and Challenges

Data remains limited and unreliable in the DRC as the last national population census took place in 1984. The civil registration system struggles to reach the population, especially in conflict zone. Academic experts have also raised concerns regarding the quality of data, particularly of government produced statistics, which are believed to be vastly underreporting significant challenges.⁵ Lack of disaggregated data makes it difficult to measure poverty reduction and development over time.

For this analysis, data has been used from sources such as the UN Humanitarian Response Plan 2024, World Bank, IMF, IOM and The Common Country Analysis of the UN.

1.4 Overview of the Main Poverty Indicators

Poverty Indicators

Poverty Line	74,6 %
MPI	64,5 %
HDI	0,479
Gini Index	42,1

The most recent data from the World Bank estimated a population of 99,010,212 people in 2022⁶, and the UN estimated that number to have reached over 113,6 million in December 2023.⁷ In accordance to the Congolese government's latest review of the SDGs (2023), levels of poverty are less today than a decade ago, but more than 7 out of 10 Congolese live below the poverty line of 1,9 USD per day.⁸ The DRC is among the five poorest nations in the world and the World Bank further estimated 74,6 % of Congolese people living below the poverty line of 2.15 USD a day in 2023, as shown

Figure 1. Main poverty indicators

Sources: See footnotes 9, 11, 15 & 16

⁵ Naughton, B et al. *DRC survey: an overview of demographics, health, and financial services in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2017. START Center. University of Washington.

http://uwstartcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/START-Center_DRC-Survey_Final.pdf

⁶ The World Bank. *Population, total - Congo, Dem. Rep.*

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CD>

⁷ USAID. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Complex Emergency Fact Sheet*. 2024.

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/2024-01-25_USG_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_3.pdf

⁸ UN. *Rapport d'Examen National Volontaire des objectifs de développement: République Démocratique du Congo*. 2023.

https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2023/VNR%202023%20DRC%20Report_0.pdf

in figure 1 along with other indicators, and about one out of six people living in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) lives in DRC.⁹

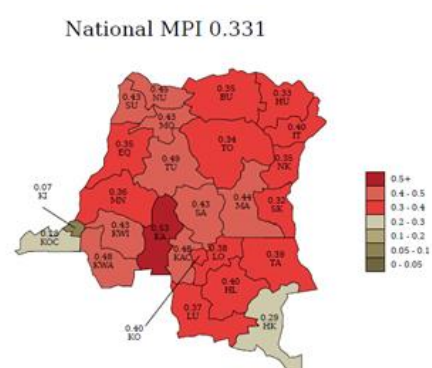


Figure 2 MPI in the DRC 2023

Source: OPHI. *Global MPI Country Briefing 2023: Congo, Democratic Republic of the (Sub-Saharan Africa)*. June 2023 p.8.

A broader analysis that takes into account monetary poverty, vulnerability, health, education and standard of living identifies that 64.5% of the population lived in multidimensional poverty in 2022, while a further 17.4% are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty, according to data from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.¹⁰ Poverty in the DRC is geographically widespread and approximately 35,6% of the urban population live in multidimensional poverty, compared with 87% of the rural

population. The provinces with highest multidimensional poverty (>80%) are; Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kwango, Kwilu, Maniema, Mongala, Nord Ubangi, Sankuru and Tshuapa as shown in figure 2.¹¹ Poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, however, it is worth noting that poverty rates have declined faster in rural

areas than in urban areas. The latest data from the World Bank indicates that the poverty rate in rural areas declined by 5.6 percentage points compared to 5.1 in urban areas (excluding Kinshasa where the poverty rate is lower than the national average).¹²

The Human Development Index (HDI) ranks countries based on measures of life expectancy, education, and per capita income. The DRC ranks among the 13 countries in the world with the lowest level of Human Development Index. The latest HDI, from 2022, is 0.481.¹³

Gini Index is indicating rising inequalities in the DRC with the score 42.1 as the most recent value from 2012.¹⁴ (GNI per capita changed by about -33.9 percent between 1990 and 2022).¹⁵ A small wealthy elite possessing the political and economic power while the majority of the population live in poverty lacking basic needs and services.

The Humanitarian situation. DRC is one of the countries in the world with highest risk for humanitarian crisis (position 4 of 191 on Inform Risk Index in 2024).¹⁶ DRC is experiencing a complex, protracted crisis, resulting from a combination of factors such as escalating conflict and violence, climate shocks such as drought and floods and disease outbreaks that are added to poverty and other stress-factors. These shocks

⁹ The World Bank. *Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview*. 2024.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

¹⁰ UNDP. *Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023 Unstacking global poverty: data for high impact action*. 2023 [COD.pdf \(undp.org\)](https://www.undp.org/publications/multi-dimensional-poverty-index-2023)

¹¹ OPHI. *Global MPI Country Briefing 2023: Congo, Democratic Republic of the (Sub-Saharan Africa)*. June 2023. [file:///C:/Users/alt303/Downloads/CB_COD_2023%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.ophi.org.uk/publications/global-mpi-country-briefing-2023-congo-democratic-republic-of-the-sub-saharan-africa)

¹² Kouassi Yeboua.. *Development pathways for the DRC to 2050*. ISS African Futures. 2024. <https://futures.issafrica.org/special-reports/country/drc/#05-poverty-and-inequality>

¹³ UNDP. *Human Development Index: Congo (Democratic Republic of the)*. 2024. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/COD>

¹⁴ The World Bank. *Gini index - Congo, Dem. Rep.* <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CD>

¹⁵ UNDP. *Human Development Index: Congo (Democratic Republic of the)*. 2024. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/COD>

¹⁶ [INFORM Risk \(europa.eu\)](https://www.informrisk.eu/). 2024-10-16

lead to increased displacement (both internal and cross-border), food-insecurity, malnutrition and humanitarian needs. They drive already poor people deeper into poverty, reduce their capacities to deal with shocks.

Internally Displaced People. It is estimated that the number of IDPs has increased from 6,9 million to 7,2 million only between October 2023 and March 2024 and that there are 2,5 million returnees.¹⁷ A quarter of the population, 25,4 million people, require lifesaving assistance in 2024.¹⁸

The food insecurity situation has reached extreme levels, from 7 million people suffering from food insecurity in 2017 to over 25.4 million people estimated to be acute food insecure in 2023, one of the highest rates worldwide.¹⁹ Figure 4 and 5 below provides geographically mapped overviews over the current food insecurity and humanitarian needs in DRC.

Current Acute Food Insecurity Situation | July - December 2023

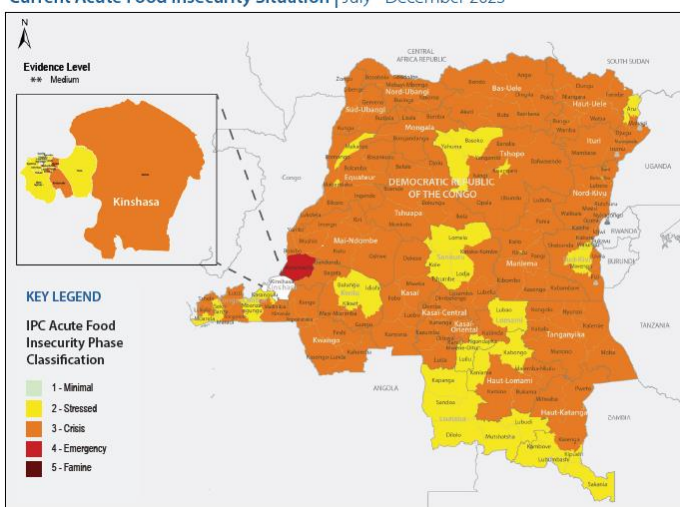


Figure 4 Acute Food Insecurity in DRC July - December 2023

Source: IPC. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): IPC Acute Food Insecurity Snapshot July 2023 – December 2023. 2023

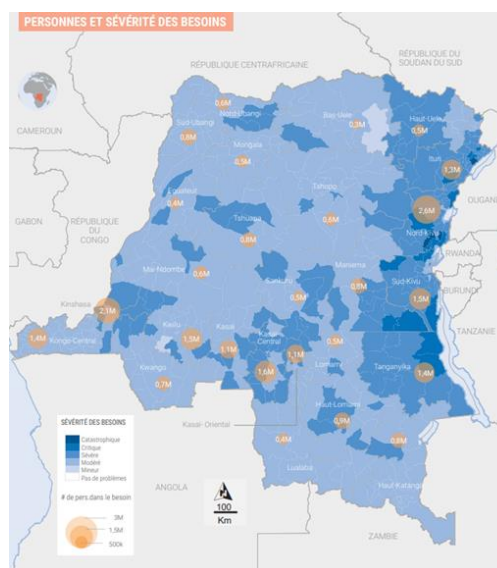


Figure 5 Humanitarian needs overview 2024

Source: OCHA. République démocratique du Congo: Aperçu des besoins humanitaire. 2023. p. 4

1.4 Who is Living in Poverty?

It can largely be concluded that most of the population in the DRC lives in poverty, with one of the highest rates of extreme poverty in the world. While the multidimensional poverty is widespread, affecting many women, men, boys, and girls from different ethnicities and different parts of the country, some groups have been particularly deprived in several poverty dimensions and being particularly vulnerable to future shocks. Women, and especially pregnant women, are pointed out as vulnerable to poverty, as well as children, and especially children under five. Child malnutrition is widespread and most of the population lives in conditions of moderate to serious food insecurity. Young people are another group mainly affected by poverty, as well as old people, people living with disabilities or sickness that makes them highly vulnerable to exclusion of society. An individual can belong to various vulnerable groups simultaneously,

¹⁷ OCHA. Democratic Republic of the Congo: Internally displaced persons and returnees, March 2024. 2024.

[Democratic Republic of the Congo: Internally displaced persons and returnees, March 2024 | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo).

¹⁸ OSCHA. Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo>

¹⁹ Ibid.

experiencing multiple levels of poverty and several layers of vulnerability at the same time and all together. All these different layers coupled with preexisting poverty leads to extreme vulnerability, without coping mechanisms to handle external risks and shocks. People living in conflict zones and internally displaced people are exceedingly affected by humanitarian crisis, malnutrition, the spread of disease and health emergencies. Women and children make out the majority of IDP's. In terms of living in conflict zones and with human security threats, women and children are hardest affected, faced with protection risks, sexual violence, and children run a risk of being recruited into armed groups, and not to forget young men who are the main at-risk group for recruitment into armed forces. Moreover, people living in mining communities and rural communities, and certain ethnical indigenous groups are more discriminated and more often denied their human rights than others.²⁰²¹ The identified vulnerable groups are hardest affected by poverty experiencing deep deprivation in many or all the different dimensions of poverty, exposed to shocks or suffer from severe poverty, and are thus furthest away from living life in dignity.

2. The Context – Why are People Poor in DRC?

When analysing the poverty situation in the DRC, it is necessary to study both the historical and geopolitical perspective. While it is easy to define and understand who is living in poverty (unfortunately the majority of the population), it is much more difficult to understand why this remains so and sometimes these issues are politically sensitive and complex. In order to understand the causes of poverty as well as the opportunities to move out of poverty Sida's conceptual MDPA-model states that it is necessary to understand the overall context in which a person is living and to identify the main risks that could aggravate poverty. In the following sections the development context will be examined along four axes; the economic and social context; the political and institutional context; the peace and conflict context; and lastly the environmental context.

2.1 Economic and Social Context

2.1.1 Demographics

DRC's population is rapidly growing with one of the highest fertility rates in the world, approximately 6.1 births per woman in 2023.²² According to projections of the National Strategic Development Plan (PNSD), the population will increase from 133 to 191 million between 2030 and 2040, and then to 278 million in 2050 if continued in this pace.²³ The high population growth in the DRC together with rapid urbanisation is likely to pose huge challenges without proper urban planning and creation of employment opportunities for young people in the urban areas. Almost half of the country's population (46%) is under the age of 15.²⁴ This means that a large portion of the population is dependent on a small workforce to provide for its needs which implies risk of social impact, with increased hunger and poverty. The rapid population growth

²⁰ Actors meeting in Bukavu, held by the Embassy of Sweden. September 2023

²¹ UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022. P.31.

<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

²² UNFPA. *World Population Dashboard, the Democratic Republic of Congo*.

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/CD>

²³ UN-HABITAT. *Democratic Republic of Congo, Country Brief A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world*. 2023.

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/07/drc_country_brief_en.pdf

²⁴ UNFPA. *World Population Dashboard, the Democratic Republic of Congo*.

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/CD>

reduces GDP per capita and increases the amount of people living in poverty. However, if you turn the coin around and look at it from another perspective, the growing youth is a great potential for economic development and a potential source of economic growth provided that the labour force is well-trained and sufficient jobs are created. The figure below shows the forecast of the country's rapid population growth which indicated an increase of the young population between 15- 29 years, representing close to 30% of the population in 2043. Once more, emphasising the importance of investments towards education and job creation, to benefit of the untapped potential of young people and their work capacity.²⁵

Chart 2: Population structure in Current Path, 1990-2043



DR Congo

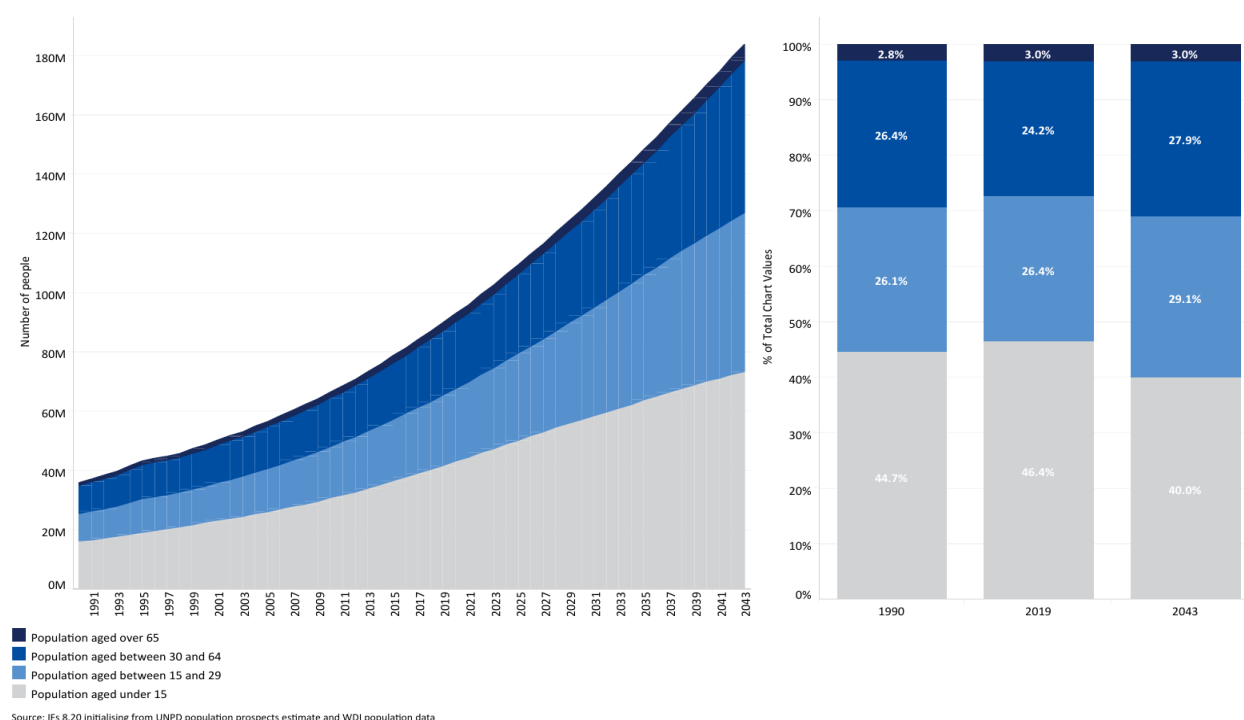


Figure 6. Population forecast in the DRC

Source: Chipanda, B. *DR Congo*. ISS Africa. 2024.

2.1.2 Macroeconomics

DRC's economy is characterised by subsistence agriculture and a nascent industrial sector. The country's economy is mostly reliant on the extractive industry as the main driver for growth.²⁶ After peaking at 8,9% in 2022, real GDP growth remained stable at 7,8% in 2023, despite negative trade shocks and the security and humanitarian crisis in the country.²⁷ The mining output growth was projected to slow down by 50% in

²⁵ Blessing, Chipanda. *DR Congo*. ISS Africa. 2024.

<https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/countries/dr-congo/>

²⁶ UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022.

<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

²⁷ IMF. *IMF Executive Board Completes the Fifth Review Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement with the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Press Release NO. 23/453. 2023.

2023, yet it stabilised at 15.4% (from 22.6% in 2022), representing 70% of the overall growth.²⁸ It should however be noted that the mining sector employs only around 1% of the population.²⁹

While more than two thirds of the working age population is employed within the agriculture sector, only about 10 million of the country's 80 million hectare of arable land is under cultivation, and farming generated just about 17,4 per cent of GDP in 2022.³⁰ Increasing cultivation and improving the effectiveness within the agricultural sector, could generate an enormous potential to improve food security and reduce poverty. As the non-mining sector catches up, climate related risks, already felt through floods and their consequence on losses of livelihoods and infrastructure are key risks inhibiting sustainable growth.^{31 32}

Inflation and exchange rate. The exchange rate depreciated by 21.6 % in 2023 and inflation accelerated by very similar levels to 19.9 % on average in 2023 (up from 9.2% in 2022). With a highly dollarised economy and a reliance on imports, the exchange rate and inflation rate are closely related. With little local production, imports exceed exports, resulting in a negative trade balance. For several years now, the DRC has been a cash economy, essentially dependent on two primary products: copper and cobalt, which account for more than 80% of its total exports.³³ Since external trade mainly comes from the mining sector it makes it very vulnerable to fluctuations of the global market.³⁴

Regional economic integration remains relatively weak.³⁵ The DRC is signatory to both the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regions as well as COMESA. While regionalisation should theoretically bring opportunities for regional trade and investment, the reality is that the DRC does not apply the common external or internal tariffs to any of these group, as the fact is that their economy is by far the least competitive and thus fuels an attitude of protectionism against all regional players.

2.1.3 Insufficient infrastructure for economic and social development

When one discusses the competitiveness of the economy the major hinderance is the lack of infrastructure for transportation. There is no deep seaport in the country, no functioning railway and a very limited road network. It is therefore extremely difficult and costly to move products across the country and to bring goods in and out of the country leaving the country in the predicament of only exporting primary raw materials and importing most finished goods including a disproportionate amount of food products and consumer goods. DRC is one of the most infrastructurally challenged countries in the world, with lack of roads, telecommunication networks, power, sewage, water, hospitals, school systems etc. Infrastructure not

[IMF Executive Board Completes the Fifth Review Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement with the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

²⁸ The World Bank. Overview. 2024

[Democratic Republic of Congo Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank](#)

²⁹ UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022. P.31.

<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

³⁰ International trade administration. *Congo, the Democratic Republic of the - Country Commercial Guide*. 2024.

<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/democratic-republic-congo-agriculture>

³¹ The World Bank (2022) [CONGO, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE MPO \(worldbank.org\)](#)

³² IFAD. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2019-2024*. 2019.

[EB-2019-127-R-21-Rev-1.pdf \(ifad.org\)](#)

³³ UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022.

<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

³⁴ The World Bank. Overview. 2023.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

³⁵ UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022. P.31.

<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

only enables business and industry development but also increases efficiency in the delivery of social services. Infrastructure shortage is considered as one of the key binding constraints that are impeding higher productivity and inclusive economic growth in the DRC.

2.1.4 Financial flows

Government revenue in the DR Congo stood at 12% of GDP (equivalent to US\$5.7 billion) in 2021. In 2022 tax Revenue was only 7.3% of GDP. The Public Expenditures trend is going upwards, 19.7% of GDP in 2022, mainly due to increased security spending, arrear payments, wage adjustments and fuel subsidies. Expenditures are formally regulated according to international standards, but the rules are not respected. Budgetary execution through May 2023 reveals a continuation of similar spending patterns, with higher exceptional spending despite revenue shortfalls and under execution in other spending.³⁶ DRC's national debt is relatively stable (slightly decreasing) at 22%, down from 23.7% of GDP (2022).³⁷ Foreign direct investment (FDI) is mostly focused in the extractive sector and increased from \$1.3 billion in 2003 to \$25.6 billion in 2019, and is characterized by reinvestment of profits by foreign companies.³⁸ Investment confidence is still low and the World Bank ranks DRC 183/190 globally in their ease of doing business index.³⁹ There is a mix of financial flows coming into the DRC as can be seen in figure 10. These vary based on income per capita levels.

In 2022, DRC received 3.25 billion in net official development assistance, making up 49.4% of total external flows (above, but in line with expected values). DRC is still heavily dependent on foreign aid to provide basic services like education and healthcare. Aid constituted about 5.4% of the country's GDP in 2021, which was below the average of nearly 7.2% of GDP of low-income African countries.⁴⁰ The DRC also benefits from large remittances (a secondary revenue stream) from its diaspora, amounting to 3% of GDP.⁴¹

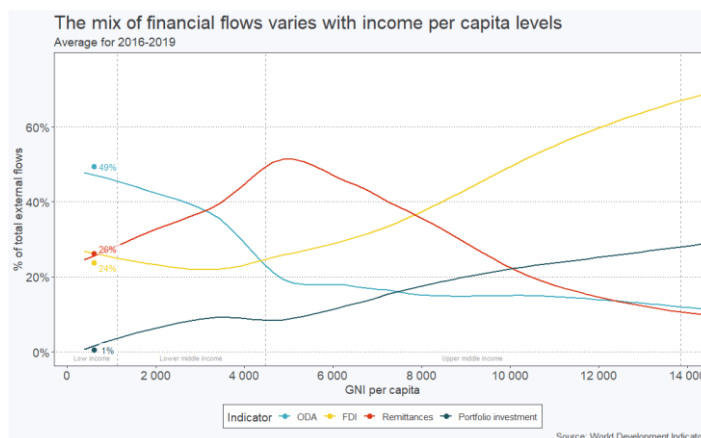


Figure 7. Financial flows varies with income per capita levels

Source: World Bank. World development indicators.

[World Development Indicators | DataBank](#)

³⁶ IMF African Dept. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Fourth Review Under the Extended Credit Facility, Request for Modification of Quantitative Performance Criterion, and Financing Assurances Review-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2023:244 (2023). 1934-7685. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2023/244/article-A001-en.xml>

³⁷ The World Bank. *Overview*. 2024

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

³⁸ Coface. *Congo (Democratic Republic of)*. 2024.

<https://www.coface.com/news-economy-and-insights/business-risk-dashboard/country-risk-files/congo-democratic-republic-of>

³⁹ The World Bank. *Ease of Doing Business rankings*. 2020.

<https://archive.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings?region=sub-saharan-africa>

⁴⁰ Blessing, Chipanda. *DR Congo*. ISS Africa. 2024.

<https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/countries/dr-congo/>

⁴¹ Coface. *Congo (Democratic Republic of)*. 2024.

<https://www.coface.com/news-economy-and-insights/business-risk-dashboard/country-risk-files/congo-democratic-republic-of>

2.1.5 Arbitrary tax regime, tax evasion, high levels of corruption, human rights violations and illicit mineral trade

A highly complex and arbitrary tax regime combined with high levels of corruption in society enables and encourages irresponsible and bad practices of companies, fuelling tax evasion. The current conflicts in certain provinces, especially in the eastern DRC also reflect the impact of weak mining revenues on people's livelihoods and human security.⁴² Human rights violations related to the mining sector have been continuously noted, including people being forced out of their homes and farmland to make way for the expansion of large-scale industrial mining projects.⁴³ Furthermore, the DRC struggles with widespread corruption (the country is ranked 162 out of 180 in the Corruption Perceptions Index⁴⁴) and illegal trade of its minerals which is facilitated by the conflict and weak border controls, resulting in the loss of economic growth and loss of important tax revenue.

2.1.6 Budget for basic social services, health, and education

Reforms to ensure free education and universal access to health care are high on the government's agenda with a strong focus on decentralization. However, realization of education reform is still far from reach, the reality is low quality of education, shortage of teachers with the required skills, lack of equipment and overcrowded classrooms. The government spending on education was about 2.5% of GDP in 2019 while the sub-Saharan African average was 4.3% of GDP. The education system as well as the health system are severely underfunded and relying to a large extent on faith-based organisation. In 2013, 45% of hospitals in the country were managed by religious organisations, 44% by the government and 11% by private firms. Lack of investment, mismanagement and decades of conflict have led to a near-collapse of the health system.⁴⁵ Responding to the competing needs in a challenging context, efforts have been made to increase the share of the state budget for key social sectors, representing 29.8% of the total budget (including 16.7% for education, 10.3% for health and 2.7% for social protection). In 2023, the DRC ambitiously increased the state budget to US\$16.1 billion with social sectors accounting for 30.5% (including a slight increase for education).⁴⁶ In 2022, the government launched the 1,7 billion USD Development Program for the 145 territories (PDL-145T) to increase the supply of public provision of basic social services, improve the resilience of local populations, and strengthen institutions, including public investment program aimed at addressing social infrastructure needs at the regional level. The PDL-145T is aligned with the National Strategic Development Plan, including improving access to basic infrastructure and services in rural areas and after a slow start in 2022, the implementation was expected to accelerate in 2023, with government aiming to improve transparent procurement and investment processes.⁴⁷ Infectious diseases such as Ebola, Mpox, cholera and HIV-Aids are also affecting the vulnerable population. Outbreaks in the DRC are characterized by a difficulty in containing and controlling the spread of disease in remote and densely populated areas, and the complex sociopolitical context in which the outbreaks occur. Control efforts have been hampered by challenges such as insecurity, limited healthcare infrastructure, and community mistrust

⁴² UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022 p.13.

<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

⁴³ Amnesty International. *DRC: Powering Change or Business as Usual?*. 2023.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR62/7009/2023/en/>

⁴⁴ Transparency International. *DRC. Country data*. 2023. [Democratic Republic of the Congo - Transparency.org](https://www.transparency.org/en/country/DRC)

⁴⁵ Kouassi Yeboua. *Development pathways for the DRC to 2050*. ISS African Futures. 2024.

<https://futures.issafrica.org/special-reports/country/drc/#05-poverty-and-inequality>

⁴⁶ UNICEF. *Country office Annual report 2022*. 2023. [Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo-2022-COAR.pdf \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/drc/reports/country-office-annual-report-2022)

⁴⁷ IMF African Dept. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Fourth Review Under the Extended Credit Facility, Request for Modification of Quantitative Performance Criterion, and Financing Assurances Review-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2023:244 (2023). 1934-7685.

of authorities and healthcare workers. Examples of these challenges are seen in the rapid spread of a new strain of the mpox virus along the eastern border of the DRC. Even though an epidemic of mpox was brought under control in 2022 by vaccinating vulnerable groups poor access to a weak health system and lack of early warning systems has led to a continued spread. The government health authorities have in August 2024 reported over 17 000 cases of which 580 deaths due to mpox.

2.1.7 Economic reforms, diversification, and growth

In addition to substantial economic reforms, investors and citizens' confidence will have to be reestablished with much needed improvements to the business environment, tax regime, reduction of corruption and improved security. Furthermore, for the mining sector to contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality, tax revenues need to be improved, employability increased and improved protection of the environment needs to be ensured. There is also a great potential to increase work opportunities around the sector with the right policies and regulations. Low revenues limit the government's capacity to finance urgent development and social needs such as infrastructure, health, and education to improve the lives of the Congolese people. Moreover, the Congolese economy needs to be diversified, as it is currently heavily reliant on the mining sector, public policies conducive to structural change and economic diversification are required.

2.2 Political and Institutional Context

2.2.1 Exercising power

DRC has been characterised by recurrent conflicts and political instability, poor governance and ineffective economic policies ever since independence. And even though the first peaceful transfer of power in 2018 gave hope for stability there have not been improvements in growth and development. The last two election cycles of 2018 and 2023 led to one of the historic opposition parties, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), coming to power. Despite this change, the political context has not really changed but rather remained largely the same.⁴⁸ The new leadership in the country is still characterised by embezzlement of public funds and impunity that enrich a minority in power at the expense of the majority of the population.

2.2.2 Corruption

Corruption has taken on very worrying proportions, including within the very institution responsible for legislating and monitoring government action.⁴⁹ Furthermore, corruption in the mining sector, including non-compliance with environmental regulation, goes on with impunity and there are attacks against environmental defenders by logging and mining companies.^{50 51 52}

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch. *République démocratique du Congo*. <https://www.hrw.org/fr/africa/democratic-republic-congo>.

⁴⁹ In a report entitled "The DRC facing political demobilization: loss of confidence and risk of high abstention", published on October 19, 2021, the Groupe d'Etudes sur le Congo (GEC) and the Bureau d'Etudes, de recherche et de consulting international (BERCI) state that the National Assembly and the Senate represent the most corrupt institution in the country.

⁵⁰ Global Witness. *Democratic Republic of Congo*. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/all-countries-and-regions/democratic-republic-congo/>;

⁵¹ Responsible Mining Foundation. *Harmful Impacts of Mining: when extraction harms people, environments and economies*. 2021. https://www.responsibleminingfoundation.org/app/uploads/RMF_Harmful_Impacts_Report_EN.pdf

⁵² RTBF. *Environnement en RDC : opposés au pétrole, des défenseurs de la nature se disent menacés*. 2022. <https://www.rtbf.be/article/environnement-en-rdc-opposes-au-petrole-des-defenseurs-de-la-nature-se-disent-menaces-11052033>

The BTI index dimension, as shown below in figure 8, measures a country's achieved state of development, on the way to democracy and a market economy, in international comparison and identifies successful strategies for peaceful changes.⁵³



Figure 8. BTI index for DRC overall results

Source: BTI-project. Congo, DR.

2.2.3 Governance and social justice

Threats, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests continue,⁵⁴ including of human rights defenders, opposition members and journalists. In almost every province of the country, people are detained in violation of the most basic procedural rights, while their conditions of detention are inhumane. The social exclusion of people with disabilities and women and girls reaches alarming levels. People with disabilities make up about 15% of the Congolese population but lack political representation and women represent solely about 12% of the National Assembly seats while they make up 52% of the Congolese population.

In addition to the lack of transparency and accountability, the governance of the country is marked by widespread human rights violations and repression while the last two general elections were considered a positive signal for democracy. It is disillusioning to observe the current repression of public demonstrations led by opposition parties and citizens' movements, the chronic instability of provincial institutions, the unfinished electoral reforms, the political instrumentalization in the process to set up the new Independent National Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court and the inoperability of the National Human Rights Commission, notably for budgetary reasons. All these facts, combined with the lack of a real culture of citizen control, are not likely to contribute to the rise of a democracy, progress to achieve gender equality or a state-building culture.

⁵³ BTI-project. Congo, DR.

https://atlas.bti-project.org/1*2024*CV:CTC:SEL COD*CAT*COD*REG:TAB

⁵⁴ UNJHRO's 2023 annual report documented 287 cases of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms linked to restrictions on democratic space. This represents a decrease on the number of cases recorded under the previous regime, notably in 2018, when UNJHRO recorded 1054 cases.

2.2.4 The judicial system

The judicial system, which is supposed to guarantee individual freedoms and the fundamental rights of citizens,⁵⁵ is unfortunately dysfunctional, undermined as it is by the corruption, political influence, lack of staffing, and an insufficient public budget. The justice budget represents less than 2% of the national budget and its execution rate is generally around 50%. Of the 1144 courts planned, only 328, representing 23%, have been set up and are operational. Similarly, of the 229 prisons planned, only 108 are operational, and some are difficult to access, with inhumane and degrading conditions of detention and no prospect of rehabilitation. There is no legislation on legal aid, the protection of victims and witnesses, or on alternatives to imprisonment. As a result, millions of Congolese, especially in rural areas, have no access to formal justice mechanisms, often giving way to mob justice and other informal justice systems which often operate in a discriminatory manner, in particular against women. This could potentially be a latent source of conflict in the country.

2.3 Peace and Conflict Context

2.3.1 Brief overview of a complex conflict context

The DRC has been plagued by protracted armed conflict for over 30 years. It has experienced significant political and security developments since 2019 with changing of the regime. Replacing Joseph Kabila after

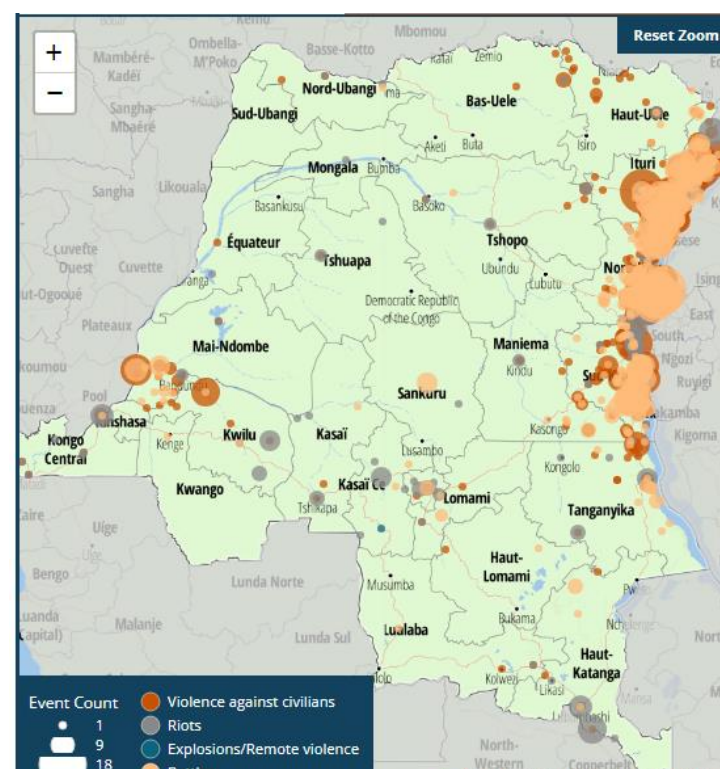


Figure 9. Conflict watchlist DRC 2023

Source: ACLED. *Conflict Watchlist: Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2023

18 years of rule, Tshisekedi took command of the country in January 2019. Some initiatives have been undertaken, but no significant changes have been made, from a safety point of view. The DRC has remained affected by violent conflict, widespread deadly violence, and human rights abuses by armed groups in the eastern provinces Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. The general security situation in the west also peaked in 2022 with the situation in the Mai-Ndombe province. Tensions between the ethnic groups Teke and Yaka have contributed to new flows of internally displaced people closer and closer to the capital Kinshasa. . The DRC rates among the five least peaceful countries in the world by the Global Peace Index (GPI) (159/163 in 2023), which is a worsened situation since 2017 when the country scored 153/163.⁵⁶ As shown in figure 9, conflicts are widespread but mainly concentrated to the eastern DRC

⁵⁵ Journal Officiel, Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo amended by Law n° 11/002 of 20 January 2011 revising certain articles of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo of 18 February 2006, Special Edition, 5 February 2011, Pg.51.

⁵⁶ Vision of Humanity. 2023 *Global Peace Index: A snapshot of the global state of peace*. 2023. [GPI-2023-A3-map-poster.pdf \(visionofhumanity.org\)](https://www.visionofhumanity.org/GPI-2023-A3-map-poster.pdf)

with over 100 armed groups operating⁵⁷, leading to several efforts to destabilize the country. The conflict context is difficult to manage considering the size of the country together with the political instability, political distrust, and governance issues such as corruption, kleptocracy, and weak institutions.⁵⁸ The hardest affected by conflict and crisis within the DRC, are people already experiencing vulnerability to poverty and shocks such as women and children, indigenous people and other minorities in conflict areas. Thus, in the East, the Rwandophone community; in the Kasai, the forced repatriates from Angola; in Tanganyika, the indigenous people (pygmies); in Katanga, the economically displaced Kasaians in the mining areas.

Progress towards the sustainable development goals is lagging most behind in areas affected by conflicts and the situation is characterised by deep grievances and high levels of exclusion, lack of capacity, and limited provision of basic services to the population. Multidimensional poverty is both deep and broad.

2.3.2 Causes and drivers of conflict

The conflicts are many and complex and the causes vary in the different regions of the country. Disputes over natural resources such as land are drivers of conflict with both national and regional dimensions, resulting in displacement, cross border trade and interstate tensions with neighbouring countries. Illicit mineral exploitation is said to be the main driver and cause of conflicts in eastern DRC. Mining is also intrinsically linked to land, land rights and access to land with different conflicting interests between, mining cooperatives, industrial concession holders, artisanal miners and the communities living in the mining surroundings.⁵⁹ Land rights is also an issue between traditional customary powers and the national government and conflicts around land are often characterised by the expropriation of land, evictions, insecurity of occupation, overlapping legal systems and frameworks, inefficient land administration, and gaps in statutory land law. It is often difficult for populations to understand if their rights are formally protected by the law or not. In 2022, land disputes were the second major reason for population displacement in DRC.⁶⁰ Armed groups are often instrumentalized by local elites to achieve political and economic goals. Meanwhile the armed groups are feeding off the local communities' discontent to motivate and legitimize their violence. This does not mean however that they therefore represent the community.

2.3.3 Corruption

The weak governance together with widespread corruption is creating discontentment and imbalance between the population and the authorities. Corruption seems to be a structural aspect of institution management and the source of many ills that plague the society, including fuelling conflict.

2.3.4 Movements of people and inter-community conflicts

Over 7,2 million people are internally displaced in the DRC primarily due to conflict, in addition to climate disasters such as floods, landslides, and drought, disrupting livelihoods. The extreme levels of IDP's and

⁵⁷ ACLED. *Conflict Watchlist: Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2023.

[Conflict Watchlist 2023: Democratic Republic of Congo \(acleddata.com\)](https://acleddata.com/)

⁵⁸ Ken Matthysen & Erik Gobbers. *Armed conflict, insecurity, and mining in eastern DRC: Reflections on the nexus between natural resources and armed conflict*. IPIS. 2022.

[20221208_ILRG_IPIS_Armed-conflict-insecurity-and-mining-in-eastern-DRC.pdf \(ipisresearch.be\)](https://www.ipisresearch.be/publications/20221208_ILRG_IPIS_Armed-conflict-insecurity-and-mining-in-eastern-DRC.pdf)

⁵⁹ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, [20221208_ILRG_IPIS_Armed-conflict-insecurity-and-mining-in-eastern-DRC.pdf \(ipisresearch.be\)](https://www.ipisresearch.be/publications/20221208_ILRG_IPIS_Armed-conflict-insecurity-and-mining-in-eastern-DRC.pdf)

⁶⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council. *Briefing note: Landless and Displaced The Struggle for Housing, Land and Property Rights in eastern DR Congo*. 2023. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/briefing-notes/landless-and-displaced/>

returnees are generating further local conflicts over land, access to basic services, and the provision of basic human needs. Moreover, movement of people for economic reasons “economic displacement” is a problem creating further conflicts between different ethnic groups. For example, the tensions between Kasaïans and the population of Katanga (in the copper belt) are at risk of erupting again. The tensions go back to colonial times when work force was imported from other regions, disconnecting people from their land, erasing the feeling of identity, belonging and ownership of the land exploited for its minerals. The so-called strategy of divide and conquer was used to control different regions. This strategy is still applied by national government to control customary leaders, and by different actors to control resources. Ethnicity is a powerful mobilizing force in politics, however, the different ethnic groups and minorities in the country is complex even by the standards of regions, as many as 250 ethnic groups and up to 700 languages and dialects have been distinguished within DRC. The inter-community tensions are felt in various regions in the country, with access to land and livelihood as the main cause and driver for conflict.⁶¹

2.3.5 Conflict, violence and insecurity causing repeated humanitarian crisis.

Clashes between armed groups and widespread violations of human rights, have caused unprecedented levels of humanitarian need with increased levels of vulnerability and risks for the population that forces them to flee their homes leading to large scale displacement. Conflicts are also one of the key drivers of food insecurity and has led to the weakening of state authority, as well as the disruption of social, community and power balances.⁶² The conflicts are leading to human rights violations, sexual and gender-based violence (rape as a strategy of war), abuses and generational trauma, extreme levels of displacement, disrupting livelihoods and driving people into poverty and crisis.

2.3.6 Governance and Peace efforts

When the DRC joined the East African Community (EAC) in April 2022 the hope was to reap political and economic benefits from the membership. The EAC facilitated meetings on the peace and security situation in the DRC, where former Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta appointed representatives in Nairobi to facilitate a mechanism for armed groups to lay down their arms and for community reintegration. During this meeting, the EAC heads of state agreed to send a Kenyan-led regional force to combat armed groups in the east and urged foreign groups to disarm and leave the DRC. Unfortunately, their mission failed and was suspended due to accusations of working in collaboration with the M23 which according to the UN Group of Experts is supported by Rwanda. M23 has continued to control large parts of North Kivu, increasing regional tensions.

The EAC summit on 24 November 2023 noted the DRC's decision not to extend the mandate of the EAC regional force and in December the regional force left eastern DRC. Replaced by the successor SADC regional force with troops from South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania in 2024.

The MONUSCO mission in the DRC is one of the largest and longest UN peacekeeping operations, it received increasing critique from both Congolese population and authorities, saying that the decades long UN mission has failed to protect civilians from armed groups. Demonstrations erupted in eastern DRC in July 2023, demanding the departure of MONUSCO peacekeepers. The protests became increasingly

⁶¹ Minority Rights Group. *Kasaïans of Luba origin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2018.

<https://minorityrights.org/communities/kasaïans-of-luba-origin/>

⁶² Famine Early Warning Systems Network. *Persistent conflicts in the east will lead to significant humanitarian needs until January 2025*. 2024.

<https://fews.net/southern-africa/democratic-republic-congo/food-security-outlook/june-2024#:~:text=Conflict%20is%20one%20of%20the,climate%20and%20abundant%20regular%20rainfall.>

violent, resulting in a dozen deaths among civilians and peacekeepers. In late September, President Tshisekedi responded to the protests and requested an “accelerated” withdrawal of MONUSCO.⁶³ However, the UN Security Council extended MONUSCO’s mandate, reflecting an agreement reached between the government and MONUSCO for an orderly and responsible withdrawal, prioritising civilian protection, stabilisation, governance and security reform. The renewed mandate does not define a date for the withdrawal in Ituri and North Kivu but rather refers to a withdrawal based on an analysis of the situation and the government’s capacity to maintain peace, while the withdrawal in South Kivu will end in June 2024.⁶⁴

Security reform is a tenuous process considering the persistence of armed groups, especially in the east. In November 2023, the President called on the country’s youth to form “vigilante groups” to confront the M23 and its allies. The persistent presence of armed groups has challenged the DRC’s efforts to maintain peace and stability in the country. The government’s initiatives, such as the National Demobilisation, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilization Program (P-DDRCS programme), have sought to address this challenge. The government approved the strategy in April 2023. It aims to stabilise the region by focusing on social cohesion, restoring state authority, community recovery, governance, and transitional justice. The strategy is informed by past programmes and stresses the importance of involving local communities in decision-making. The goal is to empower provincial and local actors to customise the program to fit their needs and address security and socio-economic concerns.

2.4 Environmental Context

2.4.1 An environment of local, regional and global importance at risk

The DRC is a giant country with a range of ecosystems, with savannahs, rainforest and the Congo River which are amongst the most diverse in the world. DRC hosts the world’s largest peatlands in its northwestern parts. The eastern parts of the country have geologically active volcanoes and mountains. The majority of the Congo basin rainforest is located on DRC territory. It is the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon and the only one with a net uptake of carbon, storing up to 8% of global forest carbon stocks,⁶⁵ which is of global importance for climate regulation, biodiversity and rainfall patterns. It is crucial for rainfall patterns in big parts of Africa. The seasonal rainfalls are vital to the health and economic prosperity of the region, for example, supporting agricultural production and thus national food security. Hence, with less forests there is greater risk for increased humanitarian needs and can also make recruitment to armed groups easier as people have difficulties sustaining themselves through agriculture etc. The rate of deforestation has been increasing and was about 500 000ha in 2023. In contrast to the large rainforests in South America and Indonesia, deforestation is not mainly driven by commercial interests, but by poverty, through slash and burn agriculture and charcoal production. Illegal logging is a threat, but sustainable forestry can be a good source of income if local transformation is done.

The DRC is a biodiversity hotspot with several endemic species such as Bonobo and Okapi, it is also probable that many species are not yet discovered in the deep forests and rivers. Forest products such as larvae and several plants are important sources of food and medicine for the Congolese population. Fishing

⁶³ Human Rights Watch. *World report 2024: Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2024.

[World Report 2024: Democratic Republic of Congo | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

⁶⁴ United Nations Security Council Res/2717 (2023). 2023

⁶⁵ The World Bank Group. *Climate Risk Profile: Congo, Democratic Republic*. 2021.

[15883-WB_Congo, Democratic Republic Country Profile-WEB.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](#)

is an important source of income and protein in many parts of the country due to the large riverine network. However, the biodiversity in the DRC is decreasing due to land use change, overfishing and hunting. Illegal wildlife trade is an imminent threat. About 13% of the country's area is covered by protected areas including 9 national parks of which 1 is a UNESCO world heritage site and one is the largest forest park in Africa.

Over 50% of Africa's surface freshwater resources are found in the DRC. Despite this, the country faces one of the lowest rates of access to drinking water in sub-Saharan Africa. This is mainly due to the lack of infrastructure, where most of the population lack access to potable water and over 33 million people lack access to water in rural areas.⁶⁶ Malnutrition, air pollution, and lack of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) are factors keeping people in poverty as well as driving factors and the cause of most deaths in the country. Lack of irrigation is one of the limiting factors for agricultural production, a sector that has a massive potential thanks to large areas of arable land and diverse climatic and topographic zones that makes production of a large range of products possible. Waste management is practically inexistent and insufficient especially in the more populated areas and tonnes of plastic ends up in the Congo River and other waterways creating floods and landslides.

The DRC is one of the most mineral rich countries in the world with diamonds, gold, 3T, copper, cobalt, lithium etc. Not all resources have been mapped yet but it is estimated that DRC has one of the biggest mining potentials in the world already with the minerals that have been mapped. For example, the main reserve of cobalt globally is currently found in the DRC and the DRC is the biggest exporter in the world of tantalum and second largest of copper. The mining industry is also a major source of pollution affecting local populations.

2.4.2 A population dependent on the environment and vulnerable to climate change

Despite the country's important impact on the global environment, the DRC is still scoring extremely low on various environmental and climate change indexes and is far from securing an environmentally sustainable development for its population. According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index, in 2024, the DRC was ranked in the bottom 4, 184/187 countries. The DRC received a high vulnerability score and low readiness score which means it is very vulnerable to climate change and ill-prepared to deal with its impacts.⁶⁷ This at the same time as their emissions per capita is 0,0 ton (only Somalia and CAR has that low). On the 2022 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), DRC was ranked 119 out of 180 countries on environmental health and ecosystem vitality. These indicators provide a gauge at a national scale of how close countries are to established environmental policy targets.⁶⁸ With the changing climate, the DRC is expected to experience higher heat stress and more extreme climate events including changed rainfall patterns leading to lower agricultural production and less access to freshwater resources. Climate change could reverse hard-won socioeconomic gains disproportionately affecting the poor, especially women and excluded populations.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ UNICEF. *Water, sanitation and hygiene: Every child has a right to water, sanitation and a safe and clean community.* [Water, sanitation and hygiene | UNICEF](#)

⁶⁷ University of Notre Dame. *Global Adaptation Index.* <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/>

⁶⁸ Environmental Performance Index. *Dem. Rep. Congo.* [Dem. Rep. Congo | Environmental Performance Index \(yale.edu\)](#)

⁶⁹ World Bank Group. *Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Country Climate and Development Report.* 2023. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/40599>

The fact that the population is directly dependent on natural resources such as forests, land, and rivers make the population more sensitive to environmental degradation and climate change. One reason to the sensitivity is that about 70% of the population is dependent on rainfed agriculture which is difficult as the rainfall patterns change. There is not enough data about pollution levels. However, testimonies and effects of pollution are seen on populations such as illnesses, biodiversity loss and more. This is especially common in mining regions. Environmental Impact Assessments are obligatory according to the law but are rarely properly done, published and followed up on. The DRC is regularly struck by natural disasters such as floods, landslides, droughts, and volcanic eruptions and these are estimated to increase with a changing climate. Environmental degradation and climate change is a driver to humanitarian crises in the country. Even though the Government of the DRC identified climate change as a priority in its National Strategic Development Plan (PNSD) 2019–2023, the perception is that there is no preparedness in place to prevent future environmental disasters.

2.4.3 Weak institutional capacity and governance as well within the environmental space

The environmental laws are in many cases well developed but the implementation of them is very weak or inexistant. Environmental activists are under threat and there are regular incidents with killings and harassments. The capacity to report on international climate and biodiversity commitments (NDCs and NBSAPs) is very limited and there are huge needs of capacity development to be able to sustainably manage the natural resources in the country. Data regarding a lot of environmental factors are lacking such as health and environmental quality, geology, hydrology, biodiversity etc. Land rights issues are present in all parts of the country and is a driver to both conflict and poverty. Indigenous people continue to be discriminated even though a new law was passed in recent years to improve their rights.

The government is promoting DRC as a “solution country” to climate change, due to its vast forest carbon stock and rich minerals which can be used for the green transition. The government is hence pushing for further investments in carbon credits and mining. This however risks an increased rate of exploitation that can harm the environment, have negative health impacts and deprive local communities of rights to their land. Nevertheless, if the carbon credits are managed and regulated properly by the Congolese government it can be a great source of income for the country and generate revenue used for poverty reduction and investments to better handle climate change. (“Win, win” solution for the countries responsible for the largest emissions of greenhouse gases in the world, as well as a solution for the DRC towards sustainable and inclusive development).

The DRC’s vast natural environment and mineral resources make it one of the most unique countries in the world. No other country on the continent has such quantities of forests, water, minerals and biodiversity. The potential for agriculture and electricity production is enormous. If the natural resources are well managed and their benefits shared fairly, they cannot only have huge positive impact on the global work to combat climate change and promote biodiversity, but also pave the way out of poverty for the population. Sustainable use of natural resources is of major importance as it connects so strongly to the development challenges and makes a long term reliant, diverse, and environmentally friendly economy possible.

3. Dimensions of Poverty – How are People Poor?

3.1 Resources

Being poor in terms of resources means not possessing or having access to, or power over, resources that can be used to sustain a decent living standard, meet basic needs and improve one's life. Resources can be both material and non-material: a decent income or physical and human capital, such as being educated or have professional skills, being healthy, having agricultural tools or means to transport goods in towns. Resources can also be access to natural resources and ecosystem services, such as land, clean air and water, goods and services from forests and livestock. It can also be having time and a social network, formal or informal. What resources a person needs and has access to, or power over, is context-specific and depends on variables like gender, age, etc. Resources are interlinked with the three other dimensions. For example, professional skills are linked to opportunity to find employment, access to capital and land could be linked to power and voice, and health can be related to interpersonal violence in the household.

3.1.1 Income Poverty

The last decade, the poverty rates have gone slightly down, while the number of poor people have increased (as shown in figure 10). In 2022, the income poverty was measured to 73,5% of the population living on less than 2.15 USD a day, according to World Bank statistics.⁷⁰ When measuring the economic and professional potential of citizens, DRC's Human Capital Index scores 0.37 which is below the sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.4. This means that a Congolese child born today can expect to achieve only 37% of their potential, compared to what would have been possible if they had benefited from optimal health conditions and a full quality schooling experience. The main contributors to the low score are low child survival rates under age five, high child stunting, and low quality of education.⁷¹

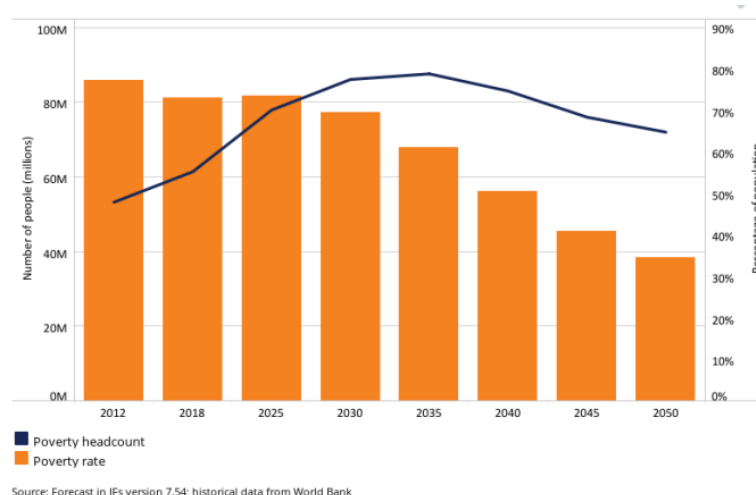


Figure 10. Trends in income poverty in DRC (<US dollar 1,90 per day)
Source: Yeboua, Kouassi. *Development pathways for the DRC to 2050*. ISS African Futures. 2023. p.15.
[Development pathways for the DRC to 2050 - ISS African Futures](#)

⁷⁰ World Bank. *Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview*. 2024.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

⁷¹ World Bank. *Democratic Republic of Congo: Human Capital Index 2020*. 2020.

[Democratic Republic of Congo \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/human-capital-index)

3.1.2 Productive employment and gender gaps

In 2020, labour force participation was 63.4%, the number was higher for men at 66.8% than women at 60.3% of which most worked in the agricultural sector. The largest participation is within the informal sector (96.8%),⁷² which makes it difficult to estimate levels of unemployment. Among youth the unemployment rate stands at 31.4%. While women's labour force participation rate in the DRC is considered relatively high (be it formal or informal), women earn considerably less than men and own fewer assets. A 2021 DRC Gender Diagnostic Report identifies three major factors contributing to persistent and significant gender gaps: control over land, voice and agency, and risk and uncertainty including vulnerability to shocks and gender-based violence.⁷³ The medium-term outlook for DRC is favourable with growth projected at 5.7% in 2024 and 5.6% in 2025. Mining sector investment and exports remain the key drivers of growth, owing to capacity expansion and recovery in global demand.⁷⁴ 50-90% of the state budget comes from mining, however it does not have an impact on employment rates.⁷⁵ Even though mining is the main driver for growth it is also the source of conflict, pollution, human rights abuses and deforestation, among others.

3.1.3 Humanitarian Situation

Poverty coupled with poor infrastructure, poor access to basic services and low levels of education, makes the population extremely vulnerable to crisis. The intensifying conflict is leading to human rights violations, violence (including gender-based and sexual violence), and the highest number of verified grave violations against children worldwide (3,377 violations as of June 2023).⁷⁶ Internal displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition as well as widespread epidemics continue to hold the population in a firm grip. The Humanitarian Response Plan (2023-2024) estimates that 26,4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance (this is almost 27% of the population).⁷⁷ In September 2023, the DRC hosted the most IDP's in Africa (6.1M, of which 60 per cent are women)⁷⁸ During the first three months of 2024 the numbers of IDP's increased to 7,2 million, over 80% of the displacements due to increased armed attacks and clashes.⁷⁹ The IDP camps are often overcrowded and struggle to provide basic services and security, exacerbating the

⁷² International Labor Organization, *Country profiles: Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2020 <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>

⁷³ The World Bank. *Overview*.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

⁷⁴ African Development Group. *Democratic Republic of Congo Economic Outlook*. 2024. Democratic Republic of Congo Economic Outlook | African Development Bank Group (afdb.org)

⁷⁵ UN, *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*, 2022.
<https://drcongo.un.org/fr/181266-bilan-commun-de-pays>

⁷⁶ UNICEF. *DR Congo: Children killed, injured, abducted, and face sexual violence in conflict at record levels for third consecutive year*. 2023
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/dr-congo-children-killed-injured-abducted-and-face-sexual-violence-conflict-record>

⁷⁷ Relief Web. République démocratique du Congo Plan de réponse humanitaire 2023 (février 2023). 2023. [République démocratique du Congo Plan de réponse humanitaire 2023 \(février 2023\) - Democratic Republic of the Congo | ReliefWeb](#)

⁷⁸ Relief Web. *Displacement continues to disproportionately impact women in the DRC*. 2023.

[Displacement continues to disproportionately impact women in the DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo | ReliefWeb](#)

⁷⁹OCHA. République démocratique du Congo: Personnes déplacées internes et retournées (mars 2024). 2024. [République démocratique du Congo: Personnes déplacées internes et retournées \(mars 2024\) | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](https://www.unocha.org/fr/republique-democratique-du-congo/personnes-deplacees-interne-et-retournees)

difficulties faced by displaced people. As a result, the vulnerability of displaced people has increased, particularly for those already facing difficult living conditions.⁸⁰

3.1.4 Food security

DRC has the highest number of food-insecure people worldwide, 25.4 million (one in four people).⁸¹ The DRC is considered to have one of, if not the largest hunger crisis in the world. This is followed by Afghanistan which has an estimated 19.9 million people facing severe hunger. In both countries the hunger crisis is fueled by decades of armed conflict which causes widespread displacement and disruption of vital agriculture production and the growth of essential infrastructure.

3.1.5 Natural Resources and Land

The DRC is endowed with exceptional natural resources, diverse minerals including 70% global reserves of cobalt (essential for cell phones and car batteries), 25% of the world's diamond reserves, large reserves of coltan, immense biodiversity, the second biggest rainforest globally, and vast hydroelectrical potential, as well as agricultural potential.⁸² The country covers an area of 2,345,410 km², making it the second biggest in Africa, with only 13.9% of land used for agriculture.⁸³ Land and natural resources remain vested in the state or are allocated informally through customary law. However, there is mounting evidence that opportunistic customary leaders manipulate land allocations to their personal benefit, or for patronage purposes. Overall, land reforms remain very slow in the DRC. Community rights to land and forest resources remain under threat and are vulnerable to land grabs often linked to mining and logging; although the extent of this will vary widely across the different districts. Women's land rights, although protected by the 2006 Constitution, remains vulnerable. In practice, only 4.7% of women own land, reflecting the inherent gender inequalities.⁸⁴ The mining communities are also suffering from unregulated and illegal pollution from the mines. Polluted water and soil pose health risks on the communities living and working inside or around the mines. Studies have shown that pollution leads to increased risks of birth defects in children,⁸⁵ and where there are cobalt mines, there are increased reproductive health issues among girls and women.⁸⁶ Communities living close to mines, communities in conflict areas, ethnic-minorities and indigenous people are the groups worst affected by discrimination challenges, including forced displacement from their ancestral lands, pollution of their environment affecting their livelihoods, and lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education.

⁸⁰ International Organization for Migration. *Alarming Humanitarian Crisis in Eastern DRC Calls for Urgent Action to Protect Vulnerable Populations*. 2024.

[Alarming Humanitarian Crisis in Eastern DRC Calls for Urgent Action to Protect Vulnerable Populations | International Organization for Migration \(iom.int\)](https://www.iom.int/en/news/alarming-humanitarian-crisis-eastern-drc-calls-urgent-action-protect-vulnerable-populations)

⁸¹ IPC. *Country Analysis: Democratic Republic of Congo*.

[IPC Country Analysis | IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](https://www.ipc-country-analysis.org/country-analysis/drc/)

⁸² The World Bank. Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

⁸³ Satgé, Rick de. *Democratic Republic of the Congo - Context and Land Governance*. Land Portal. 2022.

<https://landportal.org/book/narratives/2022/democratic-republic-congo>

⁸⁴ Satgé, Rick de. *Democratic Republic of the Congo - Context and Land Governance*. Land Portal. 2022.

<https://landportal.org/book/narratives/2022/democratic-republic-congo>

⁸⁵ Rosie Swash. 'Staggering' rise in women with reproductive health issues near DRC cobalt mines – study. The Guardian. 2024 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/mar/28/staggering-rise-in-women-with-reproductive-health-issues-near-drc-cobalt-mines-study>

⁸⁶ Rosie Swash. 'Staggering' rise in women with reproductive health issues near DRC cobalt mines – study. The Guardian. 2024 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/mar/28/staggering-rise-in-women-with-reproductive-health-issues-near-drc-cobalt-mines-study>

3.2 Opportunities and Choice

Being poor in terms of the dimension of opportunities and choice concerns one's possibilities to develop or use resources to move out of poverty.

"We are not poor because we want to, but because the leaders don't create opportunities".⁸⁷

3.2.1 Education and access to education

Access to education and improvement in indicators related to education has improved considerably over the past two decades, especially for girls and at earlier ages. The adult literacy rate (population aged 15 years and older) experienced an improvement from 61.2% in 2007 to 80% in 2021. Higher literacy rates improve employment prospects for the poor, and hence, an opportunity to get out of extreme poverty. Between 2000 and 2017, primary net enrolment increased by 50%, from 52% to 78%. However, the completion rate at the primary level remains low at 75%. The net attendance rate also increased from 52% in 2001, to 78% in 2018, according to UNICEF data. Despite this progress there is still a far too large number of children (7,6 million children aged 5 – 17) who are out of school and the education system is still of low quality with high rates of school dropouts. National data indicated that only 67 percent of children who enter first grade will complete sixth grade, which has an impact on the secondary level and fewer who reach secondary level. Despite the commitment to free primary education the indirect and direct costs are still borne by the households and pose a major obstacle to the poor households who fail to bear these costs. It is estimated that 97 percent of 10-year-olds cannot read and understand simple text (*learning poverty*).⁸⁸ The literacy rate of persons of the age of 15 and above is 81 percent in total,⁸⁹ showing a disadvantage for Congolese women (72 percent for women and girls,⁹⁰ and 90 percent for men and boys)⁹¹. Only 16.8 percent of girls complete secondary education, which is a challenge since girls who do not complete secondary education are more vulnerable to early marriage and twice the fertility rate.⁹²

3.2.2 Health and access to healthcare

The DRC has one of the highest child and maternal mortality rates in the world, estimated at 547/100.000 live births. The neonatal mortality rate- the number of babies dying before 28 days of life – is at 27 per 1,000 live births,⁹³ making DRC one of the top eleven most dangerous countries in the world to give birth and be born in. Malnutrition is the underlying cause of almost half of the deaths of children under the age of five, statistics show that 42% of children (under age five) are stunted, this is among the highest rates in Africa. Due to the high fertility rate combined with high food insecurity, the number of stunted children has increased. This is highly concerning considering the negative effects of malnutrition on cognitive development and academic performance, implying a significant loss of human capital for the country, which can impede development and poverty reduction. In addition, the health sector continues to

⁸⁷ Participants at the Actors Meeting in Bukavu in September 2023

⁸⁸ The World Bank. Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

⁸⁹ The World Bank. Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above).

[Literacy rate, adult total \(% of people ages 15 and above\) - Congo, Dem. Rep. | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

⁹⁰ The World Bank. Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above) – Congo, Dem. Rep.

[Literacy rate, adult female \(% of females ages 15 and above\) - Congo, Dem. Rep. | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

⁹¹ The World Bank. Literacy rate, adult male (% of males ages 15 and above) – Congo, Dem. Rep.

[Literacy rate, adult male \(% of males ages 15 and above\) - Congo, Dem. Rep. | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

⁹² The World Bank. Overview. [Democratic Republic of Congo Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank](#)

⁹³ World Health Organization. Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2020: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division. 2023.

iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/366225/9789240068759-eng.pdf?sequence=1

experience major strains with insufficient resources and several parallel and recurring epidemics such as Ebola outbreaks, malaria, cholera, measles, mpox and yellow fever. The poor living condition and lack of access to healthcare are the reasons for the recurring epidemics, of which some are considered endemic such as cholera. The DRC suffered one of the largest outbreaks of cholera in the world, with over 41 000 cases, including 314 deaths reported in 2023, the majority of cases concentrated in the conflict-affected East.⁹⁴ The health system is very weak with low to no access in rural areas. And even when there is accessible health care, it is often unaffordable. The sequestration of patients within health facilities that can't afford to pay their hospital bills is a widespread phenomenon, and hardest affected by this practice are women giving birth, and their newborn babies. To cope with the problem of unaffordable health care and to reduce the high maternal and neonatal mortality, the government launched a pilot program for free maternity care in the capital Kinshasa (in September 2023 during election year). This was meant as the first step towards introducing universal health care (UHC) in the country. However, health workers have raised concerns that hospitals are ill-equipped to handle any increased demand on services. There are not enough doctors, nurses, or trained midwives to meet the demand. (WHO) recommends a doctor to population ratio of 1:1,000, but in the DRC the ratio is 10 times lower than the minimum recommendation. The poor quality and access to healthcare is mainly due to lack of funding to the sector, mismanagement, high cost of healthcare and shortage of qualified medical staff. Furthermore, the DRC heavily relies on international aid for health financing.^{95 96}

3.2.3 Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Water and sanitation infrastructure is extremely dilapidated and inadequate. According to WHO statistics, 65% of the population do not have access to basic drinking water service and 84% do not have access to basic sanitation.⁹⁷ Water and sanitation infrastructure is chronically lacking. Access to adequate WASH services is critical to prevent many diseases such as diarrhoeal and respiratory infections.

3.2.4 Employment opportunities

The unemployment rate is low at 4.5%, in 2023. The majority of work opportunities are found in the informal sector and through vulnerable employments as the only mean for survival. The low unemployment rates are hence disguising the substantial poverty in the country.⁹⁸ The agricultural sector continues to be the main employer of the working population, for subsistence and not commercial purpose, yet failing to ensure food security and generate sufficient revenues and sustainable employment.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ The World Health Organization. *A new resolve to eliminate cholera in DRC*. 2023.

[A new resolve to eliminate cholera in DRC \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/a-new-resolve-to-eliminate-cholera-in-drc)

⁹⁵ Issa M. *The Pathway to Achieving Universal Health Coverage in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Obstacles and Prospects*. Cureus, 15(7), e41935. 2023.

[The Pathway to Achieving Universal Health Coverage in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Obstacles and Prospects - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41935/)

⁹⁷ World Bank. *Democratic Republic of Congo: In the water sector, taking stock of challenges leads to new solutions*. 2024

[Democratic Republic of Congo: In the water sector, taking stock of challenges leads to new solutions \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/publications/2024/04/01/in-the-water-sector-taking-stock-of-challenges-leads-to-new-solutions)

⁹⁸ The World Bank. *Congo, Dem. Rep.* 2023. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/congo-dem-rep>

⁹⁹ The international trade administration. *Congo, the Democratic Republic of the - Country Commercial Guide - Agriculture*. 2024 [Democratic Republic of the Congo - Agriculture \(trade.gov\)](https://ustr.gov/country/congo-dem-rep/2024/04/01/country-commercial-guide-agriculture)

3.2.5 Electrification

The DRC has the potential to provide electricity to the whole continent and beyond but the electricity sub-sector remains largely unexploited. The majority of the country has no access to electricity, with one of the lowest electrification rates on the African continent,¹⁰⁰ at less than 17% in 2019, according to household surveys reviewed for the 2019 Tracking SDG7 report, while official government statistics place that rate at 9 percent.¹⁰¹ As shown in figure 11, access to electricity is very low and almost non-existent in rural areas, only 1%, compared to 44% in urban areas (figure 12).¹⁰² Access to electricity is heavily skewed towards urban areas, and in mining areas, notably Lualaba and Haut Katanga provinces where the copper and cobalt industry is concentrated. If electrification efforts follow the same pace as during the last decade, 84 million people – or 80% of total population – will still live without electricity in the DRC by 2030.¹⁰³ Electricity is an enabler of choice, opportunity and voice as it provides opportunities for livelihoods, schoolwork and access to information. Wood and charcoal provide 95% of all domestic energy consumed in the DRC. This contributes to deforestation, loss of biodiversity and green-house gas emissions. It also results in high levels of indoor air pollution, contributing to respiratory diseases mainly affecting women, children and elderly.

3.2.6 Social protection

Lack of various forms of social protection amplifies the risks of people sliding deeper into poverty. There are limited safety nets to shocks and many expenses with key social sectors, including health and education are paid by individuals' own income, which further risks pushing people into poverty. Social protection coverage remains very low (9.6% in 2020) and only an estimated 4.7% of the population benefit from some

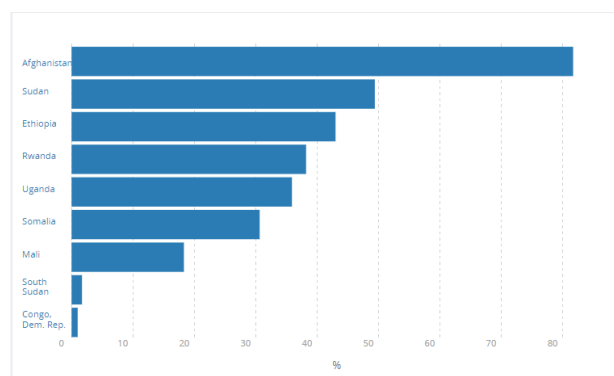


Figure 11. Access to electricity in rural areas

Source: World Bank. Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population) - Congo, Dem. Rep., Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Somalia, Mali. 2023.

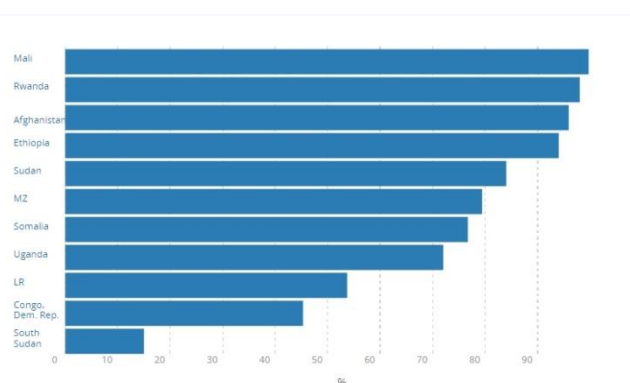


Figure 12. Access to electricity in urban areas

Source: World Bank. Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population) - Congo, Dem. Rep., Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Somalia, Mali. 2023.

¹⁰⁰ African Development Bank Group. *Democratic Republic of Congo - Inga Hydro-Power Stations and Kinshasa Distribution Network Rehabilitation and Upgrade (RDPMDP) Project - Project Appraisal Report*. 2020. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/democratic-republic-congo-inga-hydro-power-stations-and-kinshasa-distribution-network-rehabilitation-and-upgrade-rdpmdp-project-project-appraisal-report>

¹⁰¹ The World Bank. *G20 principles for quality infrastructure investment: Democratic Republic of Congo*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/104841647238131573/pdf/Democratic-Republic-of-Congo-Expanding-Access-to-Electricity-and-Services.pdf>

¹⁰² 1.5°C national pathway explorer. *What is Democratic Republic of the Congo's pathway to limit global warming to 1.5°C?*. 2022. <https://1p5ndc-pathways.climateanalytics.org/countries/congo/sectors/power/>

¹⁰³ The World Bank. *Increasing access to electricity in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Opportunities and challenges*. 2020. [World Bank Document](#)

form of social insurance.¹⁰⁴ Despite social sectors representing 29,8% of the national budget, only 2,7% of the national budget was allocated to social protection in 2022.¹⁰⁵ With social protection being mostly associated to formal employment in DRC, which is limited for the most, the effects of social protection mechanisms remain limited. Social protection schemes are also limited to some forms of conditional and unconditional cash transfers, including in the humanitarian response, relying on non-contributory schemes which have limited sustainability. Weak and ineffective registration schemes for a large population further challenge the capacity to target social protection efforts. People rely mainly on family networks and the households are left to bear the costs and consequences of unstable sources of income and unemployment, with many relying on child labour to survive. Several efforts are however in place, with large government programs supported among others, by the World Bank, such as the STEP, to expand social safety nets through unconditional cash transfers and cash-for-work programs designed to build the most vulnerable people's resilience to shocks, and (ii) developing a national social protection system¹⁰⁶. Successful implementation is however also likely conditional on stability and the ability to address good governance challenges while building other social reforms, formal employment opportunities and expanding contributory schemes coverage.

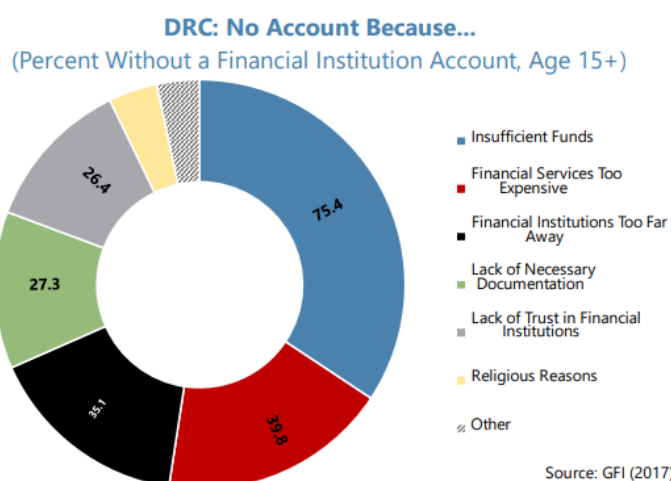


Figure 13. Reason for not having a bank account.
Source: ¹ IMF. *Financial Inclusion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Challenges to Financial Deepening and Opportunities for Development*. 2022. [Democratic Republic of the Congo: Selected Issues in: IMF Staff Country Reports Volume 2022 Issue 211 \(2022\)](#)

3.2.7 Financial services

In the DRC, financial inclusion levels are very limited and unequally distributed. People have limited knowledge of the financial systems and hence little possibility to know what services to ask for. Access to financial services enables both individuals and companies to engage in everyday financial activities. Lack of financing opportunities for small entrepreneurs and very limited access to infrastructure is contributing to low financial inclusion. There is an SME financing gap of \$6.8 billion, equivalent to about 19 percent of the DRC's GDP¹⁰⁷ Most of the country remains unbanked, and the banks are mainly found in urban areas. A very small percentage of the population have

¹⁰⁴ UN. *Bilan Commun de Pays (CCA)*. 2022.

[BILAN COMMUN DE PAYS \(CCA\) Version actualisée 18 Mars 2022](#)

¹⁰⁵ UNICEF. *Country Office Annual Report 2022: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2023. [Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo-2022-COAR.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

¹⁰⁶ The World Bank. *Providing safety nets for the most vulnerable in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Incremental steps with a large footprint*. 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2023/02/10/providing-safety-nets-for-the-most-vulnerable-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-incremental-steps-with-a-large-footpri>

¹⁰⁷ International Finance Corporation. *The Power of Financing: In the Democratic Republic of Congo, four entrepreneurs show why access to finance is vital*. 2023. [The Power of Financing \(ifc.org\)](#)

access to a bank account, only 26% of the population.¹⁰⁸ The biggest reason being insufficient funds while the second reason being that the financial services are too expensive, as shown in figure 13. Women in the DRC have poor financial inclusion, generally, women are not empowered to make financial decisions, nor opening bank accounts. If they are married, it is mostly the man as “the head of the household” who makes the financial decisions for the family. Women in the DRC are a marginal part of the financial system, no matter measured by account usage, loans outstanding, or use of mobile money services.¹⁰⁹ Financial inclusion is a key mechanism to reduce poverty, strengthen resilience, and promote prosperity in a country.

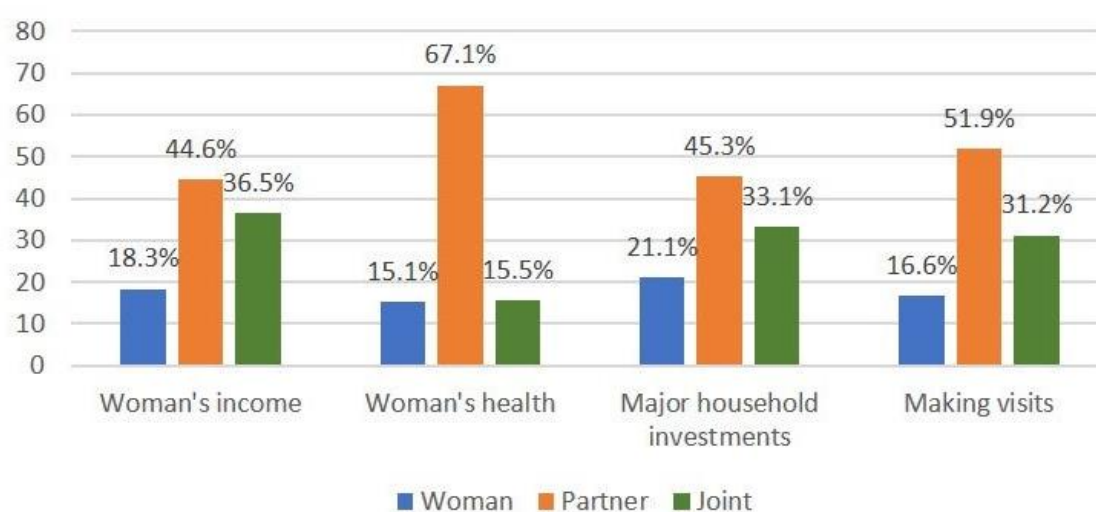


Figure 14. Who makes household decisions by domain (%)

Source: Donald, A.A. Hwang, H. Phipps, V. *Obstacles and opportunities for women's economic empowerment in the DRC*. World Bank Blogs. 2022

3.3 Power and Voice

Power and voice in the DRC are negatively affected by political instability and conflict. Access to power and voice is mainly linked to certain ethnicities, sex, and other allegiances (ethnic and religious groups). Discrimination is linked to mainly gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, and political affiliation. One of the main obstacles to access power and voice is the inability to articulate concerns and participate in decision-making, both in the public and private sphere.

3.3.1 Human rights

The human rights situation remains critical. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) documented 5,273 human rights violations and abuses throughout the country during 2023, an average of 439 violations and abuses per month. According to UNJHRO, at least 85% of these violations and abuses

¹⁰⁸ IMF. *Financial Inclusion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Challenges to Financial Deepening and Opportunities for Development*. 2022.

[Democratic Republic of the Congo: Selected Issues in: IMF Staff Country Reports Volume 2022 Issue 211 \(2022\)](#)

¹⁰⁹ B Naughton et al. *DRC survey: an overview of demographics, health, and financial services in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. START Center. University of Washington. 2017. <http://uwstartcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/DRC-Survey-Final-Presentation.pdf>

occurred in provinces affected by armed conflict. Members of armed groups committed the greatest number of human rights abuses, accounting for 64% of all cases documented throughout the country during 2023 followed by the military, police and security services that stand out as the state actors committing the most human rights abuses.¹¹⁰

Women are vulnerable even outside the conflict zones, especially in the rural areas where they are often discriminated. Many girls get married or are forced into marriage before the age of 18 despite it being illegal. In most cases the man is seen as the head of the family. Abortion is only allowed when the pregnancy is a result of rape, incest or when the mental health of the woman is in danger.¹¹¹ DRC is ranked 174/177 in the Women Peace and Security Index 2023 just before a few other countries like Afghanistan, Central African Republic and Yemen.

DRC was described by UNICEF in 2023 as probably the worst country to live in as a child. A high number of children are recruited to armed groups and are subjects of sexual and other violent abuses.¹¹²

Ethnic minority and indigenous groups are effectively missing in the political sphere. Although the constitution prohibits discrimination against women, they face discrimination in nearly every aspect of their lives. The family code assigns women a subordinate role in the household. Discriminatory and harmful social norms normalise men's power over women and increase the prevalence of gender-based violence in various forms, including conflict related sexual violence.¹¹³ Ethnic discrimination is common. Indigenous peoples also face pervasive discrimination and have limited access to public services. People with disabilities remain nationally marginalised despite the creation of a ministry dedicated to people with disabilities. Although homosexuality is not explicitly criminalised, LGBTIQ+ people are marginalised; civil society groups that explicitly mention LGBTIQ+ rights in their constitutions have been denied official registration.¹¹⁴

Another significant development in the human rights situation in the country is undoubtedly the DRC Government's decision to remove the moratorium on the execution of the death sentence, endorsed at the one hundred and twenty-fourth ordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers on 9 February 2024. To give effect to this political decision, the Minister of Justice issued a Circular Note referenced n°002/MME/CAB/ME/MIN/J&GS/ 2024 of 13 March 2024 instructing the judicial authorities to proceed with the actual execution of the death penalty when it is "consecutive to an irrevocable judicial sentence passed in time of war, during a state of siege or emergency, during a police operation to maintain or restore public order, or during any other exceptional circumstance...". This decision therefore confirmed the lifting of the moratorium in force since 2003 and represented a step backwards in the protection of the right to life provided for in several international treaties to which the DRC is a party, in particular article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

¹¹⁰ MONUSCO. *Main trends in human rights violations in the DRC - 1st January to 31st December 2023*: UNJHRO Press release. 2024

<https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/main-trends-human-rights-violations-drc-1st-january-31st-december-2023>

¹¹¹ Utrikespolitiska Institutet. *Kongo-Kinshasa – Sociala förhållanden*. 2024. <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/kongo-kinshasa/sociala-forhallanden/>

¹¹² Utrikespolitiska Institutet. *Kongo-Kinshasa – Sociala förhållanden*. 2024. <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/kongo-kinshasa/sociala-forhallanden/>

¹¹³ Zeufack, Albert. *Changing social norms and values to end widespread violence against women and girls in DRC*. World Bank Blogs. 2022. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/afrika/changing-social-norms-and-values-to-end-widespread-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-drc>

¹¹⁴ Freedom House. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. 2023. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/democratic-republic-congo/freedom-world/2023>

3.3.2 Democratic rights

The political system in the DRC is paralysed due to the manipulation of the electoral process by political elites. Citizens are unable to freely exercise basic civil liberties, and corruption is endemic. DRC ranks 4/40 regarding political rights score from Freedom House and 15/60 regarding civil liberties.¹¹⁵

Due to the ongoing conflict many displaced people did not have the possibility to vote in the elections in December 2023.¹¹⁶

Lack of access to public services and state institutions in rural areas hinder political participation. Women are underrepresented in politics and decision making. In the government that was elected in 2021, 14 of 57 members were women (25 percent).¹¹⁷ Women are politically underrepresented, holding only 12.8 percent of National Assembly seats.

There are many civil society associations and organisations in DRC. Many of them have difficulties to operate freely. Organisations working with human rights are especially targeted. Women journalists and women human rights defenders face death threats when reporting on conflict related sexual gender-based violence.¹¹⁸ Opposition leaders and supporters are often intimidated and face restrictions on movement and rights to campaign or organise public events. Under the Tshisekedi administration, some opposition members have been released from prison and some politicians living in exile were permitted to return. However, political-party officials still faced reprisals for criticizing the government.¹¹⁹ In connection with the presidential-, parliamentary and local elections in the DRC in December 2023, UNJHRO saw an increase in violations of rights related to democratic space, such as the right to be included in the electoral roll, the right to demonstration and the right to peaceful assembly.

Although media freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, journalists often face repression from authorities such as criminal defamation suits, threats, detentions, arbitrary arrests, and physical attacks in the course of their work. The DRC has a diverse media environment, but only UN-affiliated Radio Okapi and the state-owned Congolese National Radio Television are accessible nationwide; print outlets' reach is largely limited to the capital.¹²⁰

A number of national labour unions and professional associations, covering parts of the public and private sectors, operate legally in the DRC, but the overwhelming majority of workers are informally employed. Some civil servants and members of national security forces are not permitted to unionize and bargain collectively.

¹¹⁵ Freedom House. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. 2023.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/democratic-republic-congo/freedom-world/2023>

¹¹⁶ Relief Web. *Rép. Dém du Congo 2024 Plan de réponse humanitaire en un clin d'œil*. 2024.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/rep-dem-du-congo-2024-plan-de-reponse-humanitaire-en-un-clin-doeil>

¹¹⁷ Utrikespolitiska Institutet. *Kongo-Kinshasa – Demokrati och rättigheter*. 2024.

<https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/kongo-kinshasa/demokrati-och-rattigheter/>

¹¹⁸ Kvinna till Kvinna. *Standing up against gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2023.

<https://kvinnaillkvinna.org/2023/12/13/standing-up-against-gender-based-violence-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

¹¹⁹ Freedom House. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. 2023.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/democratic-republic-congo/freedom-world/2023>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

3.3.3 Rule of law

The rule of law is weak and, like all other public services in the country, the judicial system is thoroughly corrupt. The judiciary is often seen as corrupt and subject to political manipulation. It often shows bias against the opposition and civil society, while government allies typically enjoy impunity for abuses.

Lawlessness is widespread for individual citizens. In recent years, cases have often been handled by military courts, whose rules are vague and whose decisions cannot be appealed. Defendants rarely have access to a lawyer. In rural areas, regular courts are often absent and customary law that is especially discriminating against women is practised instead.¹²¹

3.4 Human Security

The violence in the DRC is having horrifying impacts on people's lives, causing a massive flow of internally displaced people and a constant threat to human security as shown in figure 15. The violence is not only restricted to the armed conflict in the east, but ranges from sexual and gender-based violence, domestic violence, as well as urban violence and crimes in other territories as well. The violence and insecurity situation are constraining people from exercising their human rights and to find pathways out of poverty. The most vulnerable to human security threats are generally people already experiencing poverty or deprivation in other dimensions, and thus hardest affected by conflict and insecurity. Prior to the conflict in Sudan, the DRC was the country with the largest internally displaced population in Africa.¹²² Women and children are overrepresented in these statistics and also mostly the victims of violence. Alarming humanitarian needs, close to 27% (26.4 M) (figure 15) of the total population, increasingly concentrated in the east. However, poverty and food insecurity are widespread throughout the country.

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

102.3 Million	26,4 Million	7,2 Million	1,1 Million	522,319
Population of the DRC	Population in need of assistance	Numbers of IDP's in the DRC	Congolese- refugees and Asylum seekers in nearby countries	Refugees and Asylum seekers in the DR
(UN- August 2023) ¹²³	(UN- September 2023)	(OCHA- April 2024)	(UNHCR- September 2023)	(UNHCR- September 2023)

Figure 15. Democratic Republic of Congo - Complex emergency

Source: USAID. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Complex Emergency Fact Sheet*. 2023.

[https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023-09-](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023-09-30_USG_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_6.pdf)

[30_USG_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_6.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023-09-30_USG_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_6.pdf)

3.4.1 Human rights violations

In 2023, the UNJHRO documented 5,273 human rights violations and abuses throughout the country, an average of 439 violations and abuses per month, representing a 12% decrease to the previous year, confirming a trend already observed over the previous two years. This decrease reflects in particular the drop in the number of violations and breaches in the five provinces in conflict in 2023, with 4473 violations

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Relief Web. *The Largest Humanitarian Needs of 2024 - Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2024.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/largest-humanitarian-needs-2024>

¹²³ Updated data from December 2023 estimates the population to 113.4 million people.

USAID. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Complex Emergency Fact Sheet*. 2024. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/2024-01-25_USG_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_3.pdf

and breaches in 2023, compared with 5091 in 2022. The majority of these violations and abuses were committed in the provinces affected by the conflict (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri), in particular by members of armed groups (3107 violations, or 77%) and state agents (900 violations, or 22%). Despite the decrease in the number of human rights violations and abuses, the human rights situation in the DRC has deteriorated in 2023 due to the multitude of armed actors. The crisis of greatest impact was the persistent attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Mambasa, Irumu and Beni territories, the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) in Djugu and Mahagi territory, the March 23 Movement (M23) in Rutshuru, Nyiragongo and Masisi territories, and intercommunity armed conflicts in the Hauts Plateaux of Mwenga, Uvira and Fizi. Other affected areas by conflict in 2023 was Mai-Mai, Nyatura Twirwaneho and Ngumino factions in Ituri, North and South Kivu. The worsening of inter-community conflicts in the Mai-Ndombe and Tshopo provinces has also contributed to the deterioration of the human rights situation and increase of humanitarian needs in these provinces.¹²⁴

3.4.2 Sexual and gender-based violence

One of the biggest social problems and security risks in DRC is the high number of rapes that are committed in the country. The conflict related sexual gender-based violence has increased, especially in the East. Armed groups and soldiers systematically commit rape, out of which many are very brutal with influence of torture, leaving the survivors with very severe injuries. Women and girls are the most exposed, but boys and men are also targeted. Armed forces are the most frequenter perpetrators.¹²⁵

Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, the UNJHRO documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 527 victims (509 women and 18 men), representing a 1% increase in the number of victims (514) for 2022. Members of armed groups were responsible for 83% of these cases of sexual violence, with a total of 437 victims.¹²⁶ The situation of children in the eastern provinces has deteriorated dramatically as they are bearing the brunt of the intensification of armed activities.¹²⁷ Gender based violence, grave violations against children, and other protection incidents increased remarkably during 2023.¹²⁸

3.4.3 Being poor in terms of human security

The decades long conflict and violence has caused and continues to cause direct harm and trauma, with severe effects on the next generations, depriving the lives of women, men, girls, and boys to develop. Conflict and displacement inhibit children from going to school; making farmers unable to harvest their crops or sell them in the market. The human security risk is increased for women and children. Women in DRC have described how it is dangerous to move between the village, the farmland, and the market due to

¹²⁴Relief Web. *Key drivers of insecurity and humanitarian crises in eastern DRC - Scenarios for 2024*. 2024.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/key-drivers-insecurity-and-humanitarian-crises-eastern-drc-scenarios-2024>

¹²⁵ Utrikespolitiska Institutet. *Kongo-Kinshasa – Sociala förhållanden*. 2024. <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/kongo-kinshasa/sociala-forhallanden/>

¹²⁶ MONUSCO. *Main trends in human rights violations in the DRC - 1st January to 31st December 2023: UNJHRO Press release*. 2024.

<https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/main-trends-human-rights-violations-drc-1st-january-31st-december-2023>

¹²⁷ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. *Deteriorating Security Situation in Eastern DRC Dramatically Impacts Children*. 2023.

[Deteriorating Security Situation in Eastern DRC Dramatically Impacts Children – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/children/da/hq/en/deteriorating-security-situation-in-eastern-drc-dramatically-impacts-children)

¹²⁸ USAID. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Complex Emergency Fact Sheet*. 2023.

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023-09-30_USG_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_6.pdf

the risks of being violated, turning daily life choices into a high risk. Being poor in terms of security often contributes to increased poverty in other dimensions of poverty as well. The human security situation in the DRC is one of the main binding constraints to human development and poverty reduction in the country.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The Binding Constraints to end Poverty

The previous MDPA covering the DRC clearly identified who and defined how people are suffering from poverty. The current situation has been analysed and updated with the latest available data, but the poverty statistics have unfortunately not changed significantly since the last MDPA. More so, the analysis in this MDPA has been carried one step further, focusing on why people are living in poverty and on *the binding constraints* that severely restrict the potential for sustained poverty reduction.

The identification of binding constraints aims to inform Sida's analysis of suitable areas of support in the strategy for bilateral development cooperation with the DRC, and the continued operationalisation of said strategy. It will also inform the upcoming in-depth strategy report, with a proposal for a new strategy, that Sida will submit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs early 2025.

Data was collected through actor meetings in Kananga, Lubumbashi and Bukavu together with internal workshops held at the Swedish Embassy in Kinshasa aimed at identifying binding constraints to end poverty. Discussions were also held with team members connected from Sida HQ.

The following binding constraints were identified as those that severely restrict the potential for sustained poverty reduction in DRC. If relieved, they would produce the largest gains in poverty reduction and economic growth in the country.

- 1) Weak institutions and poor governance
- 2) Corruption
- 3) Conflict and instability
- 4) Poor management of natural resources and limited access to land
- 5) Lack of infrastructure
- 6) Low Human Capital
- 7) Gender Inequality

4.1.1 Weak institutions and poor governance

Poor governance and weak institutions stand out as the major binding constraint to inclusive growth and poverty reduction in the DRC. Poor government effectiveness, and the absence of strong institutional and legal mechanisms to ensure accountability hamper economic progress and further deepen corruption in the country.¹²⁹ The overall lack of institutional capacity contributes to dysfunctional financial system and public administration, difficulties in delivering need for infrastructure, natural resource management and public services such as health care and education which in turn exacerbate inequalities and undermines trust in public institutions. It also hampers the ability to reduce and respond to humanitarian crisis (including food insecurity), and to control the peace and security situation. Strengthening governance and reinforcing institutions should be a priority to address this binding constraint. There is a need for comprehensive

¹²⁹ Actors Meeting in Bukavu, September 2023.

reforms aimed at strengthening institutional capacity and improving governance mechanisms. This may involve initiatives to enhance transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. Additionally, building strong institutions capable of delivering essential services such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education is crucial for fostering sustainable development. This would require adequate finances to support institutional reforms, capacity building efforts and implementation of governance mechanism, and to ensure that the financial flows are transparent, accountable, and effectively utilized to achieve outcome.

4.1.2 Corruption

Corruption, lack of transparency and misuse of public funds is severely impeding sustainable development in the DRC and is harming the poor and vulnerable the most. The DRC's public administration is undermined by a significant waste of state resources and corruption. Embezzlement of public funds, capital flight, tax evasion all diverts resources needed to invest in education, health care, infrastructure, energy supply in rural areas and improve the environment. Corruption has reached alarming proportions, including within the very institution responsible for legislating and monitoring government action.¹³⁰ Furthermore, corruption in the mining sector, including non-compliance with environmental regulation, is also affecting poor people the hardest.^{131 132 133} According to the Congolese Finance Minister, the DRC lost US\$1 billion in potential mining revenues in 2022 notably due to mining fraud and smuggling.¹³⁴ Considering the mining sector being the main driver for economic growth in the country it is a serious issue. Leveraging digitalization presents an opportunity to enhance governance, increase efficiency, and mitigate corruption. Implementing digital solutions in tax collection, administrative processes, and financial services can streamline operations, reduce opportunities for corruption, and enhance transparency. Another important measure required to tackle corruption is judicial reform. Sufficient resources should be allocated to the judiciary system to support major improvements.

4.1.3 Conflict and instability

The insecurity situation in the DRC is caused by complex factors and a multitude of actors involved, both internal and external. The conflicts bring with it deadly violence and human rights abuses. People who live in insecurity are vulnerable to serious loss of shelter, income and even their lives. The regional dimensions of the conflicts bring tensions from many fronts particularly around the border areas in the East. This has consequences on cross-border trade and social cohesion between the populations in the area. To address the constraints related to conflict, a myriad of actions would need to be taken – more than can be mentioned in this report. State security needs to be strengthened through public investment and more efficient use of public revenues; armed actors should be demobilised and reintegrated, conflict resolution (for instance around natural resource management), and peacebuilding efforts to rebuild trust and social cohesion in communities, between communities and between people in border-areas, are needed. Protection measures need to be taken, to rebuild people's sense of security. The list is not exhaustive, but a major diplomatic

¹³⁰ In a report entitled "The DRC facing political demobilization: loss of confidence and risk of high abstention", published on October 19, 2021, the Groupe d'Etudes sur le Congo (GEC) and the Bureau d'Etudes, de recherche et de consulting international (BERCI) state that the National Assembly and the Senate represent the most corrupt institution in the country.

¹³¹ Global witness. *Democratic Republic of Congo*.

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/all-countries-and-regions/democratic-republic-congo/>

¹³² Responsible Mining Foundation. *Harmful Impacts of Mining: when extraction harms people, environments and economies*. 2021. https://www.responsibleminingfoundation.org/app/uploads/RMF_Harmful_Impacts_Report_EN.pdf

¹³³ RTBF. *Environnement en RDC : opposés au pétrole, des défenseurs de la nature se disent menacés*. 2022.

<https://www.rtbf.be/article/environnement-en-rdc-opposes-au-petrole-des-defenseurs-de-la-nature-se-disent-menaces-11052033>

¹³⁴ Amunazo, Pamela. *La RDC a perdu 1 milliard de dollars américain de revenus potentiels de l'exploitation minière*. BBC Afrique. 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/articles/c8v5l2jn0qeo>.

effort is also required to address the external members of the conflict to come to the table and seek political solutions.

4.1.4 Natural resource management and limited access to land

There are countless environment obstacles such as climate change, land erosion, pollution, and poor waste management, driving people further into poverty. However, the main binding constraints that severely restrict the long-term poverty reduction is the poor management of natural resources and the limited access to land. As mentioned earlier access to land and land rights are interlinked with mining and natural resources, it is a cause and a driver of conflicts, maintaining people in poverty. Lack of secure access to land is an underlying cause of inter-community conflict and recurrent humanitarian crises- Customary law and formal law are not always coordinated.¹³⁵

There is need for land reforms to make sure people, and in particular women get access to land. While new legislation increasing indigenous rights to land and forests is a positive development, the impact of the legislation is currently unclear. Even though land is not used to the extent it could, to benefit the population, the productivity of the agriculture is extremely limited to subsistence. Despite being the country with the largest arable land in Africa, the DRC has not achieved food independence and malnutrition is widespread. Over extensive farming techniques are also damaging the land and agricultural production is also limited due to the lack of infrastructure to reach the markets.

Examples of aspects that need to be changed to address this constraint would be to increase budget allocation to small scale agriculture and to strengthen financial inclusion adapted to needs of small-scale agricultural farmers, including political prioritization, with agriculture subsidizes at community level. Promoting local actors to improve local production and commercial markets, strengthen state-led agricultural monitoring; promulgate and enforce the three laws on land rights, law of administrative boundaries and agriculture law, and to harmonize land management between customary authorities and political and administrative authorities. Furthermore, there is a need to support social cohesion and local conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve land conflicts. All these recommendations are well aligned with the government's for agricultural transformation by 2030.¹³⁶

4.1.5 Lack of infrastructure

The poor state of infrastructure is a major binding constraint for inclusive sustainable growth and poverty reduction in the DRC. The DRC has very poor transport infrastructure and half of the country is inaccessible by road. Gaps are particularly large in road transport, electricity supply, and access to improved water sources. Except the Congo River, which is the most important form of transportation, the only effective mean to travel and trade internally is by air, which is very costly. The lack of roads and absence of reliable transportation between provinces, contribute to provincial disparities, and impedes sharing of information and trading of goods and services. The country is almost entirely landlocked, and the poor condition of transportation infrastructure aggravates geographical isolation and the social and economic inequalities across provinces and between urban and rural areas. Improving the connectivity between provinces through quality roads would inevitably promote trade and inclusive growth. Initiatives, such as the infrastructure-for-minerals deal, could improve infrastructure development in the country if well managed.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Actors meeting, Bukavu September 2023

¹³⁶ ATA-RDC. *Nos priorités*.

<https://ata-rdc.org/nos-priorites/>

¹³⁷ Yeboua, K. *Development pathways for the DRC to 2050*. ISS African Futures. 2023. [Development pathways for the DRC to 2050 - ISS African Futures](#)

The poor state of financial infrastructure and lack of financial inclusion hinder the DRC's economic growth and its social development. To address financial infrastructure and connectivity problems, key investments in digitalisation are also necessary and well aligned to government ambitions, including in the upcoming PNSD 2024-2028. This opens opportunities for innovative approaches linked to the digitalisation to address poverty obstacles.

Lack of access to electricity is prevalent all over the country, despite the vast and varied energy potential, consisting of non-renewable resources, including oil, natural gas, as well as renewable energy sources, including hydroelectric, biomass, solar, and geothermal power. Lack of access to electricity impairs the health, education, and income-generating potential of the Congolese population. Most of the existing power development is directed and funded by mining companies to power their own facilities, while not benefitting the poor mining communities. The government is seeking to increase power connections by appealing for development funding and mandating that electricity companies provide power to the population in addition to mining companies. A high priority for the government is also to rehabilitate the hydroelectrical dams Inga I and II's turbines and building the third phase of the Inga Dam. And eventually the "Grand Inga," an eight-dam project that could generate as much as 40,000 megawatts, which could meet most of the African continent's current energy needs.¹³⁸

Infrastructure for water and sanitation in DRC is degraded or under-utilized, funding is inadequate, which is key to reaching the DRC's water and sanitation goals. For instance, already in 2006, the African Development Bank pointed out that with only four drilling companies, the country is grossly insufficient in capacity. Government investments are needed as well as involving the private sector to expand services is required to meet the DRC's overwhelming need for water access points and sanitation facilities.

4.1.6 Low human capital

Human Capital is an important factor for economic growth yet not enough investments have been made towards the development of human capital. Many Congolese children are still not able to go to school or university. The country has a massive problem in terms of quality and capacity of educating their largely youthful population. Some of the root causes of low educational outcomes in the country are widespread malnutrition and financial constraints.¹³⁹ Data also shows that socio-economic conditions for the population needs to be improved, as the fertility rate is still increasing, and maternal and infant mortality is one of the highest in the world while quality and capacity of health care is extremely low. Addressing the high fertility rates can help to improve human capital such as better education and health, as well as the relationship between potential labour force and dependants.¹⁴⁰ The large youth population in the DRC is an unused asset, with the possibility to generate economic growth and sustainable development. If only, investments towards education and job creation would be prioritized, it would have large effects on poverty reduction.

ISS Africa's future publishes a number of papers and articles on the importance of unlocking human capital in Africa. The low level of human capital hinders long-term development and keeps the population in multidimensional poverty. Basic human needs such as food security, water and shelter, as well as security

¹³⁸ International Trade Administration. *Congo, the Democratic Republic of the - Country Commercial Guide - Energy*. 2024 [Democratic Republic of the Congo - Energy \(trade.gov\)](https://ustr.gov/country/congo-democratic-republic-of-the/country-commercial-guide/energy)

¹³⁹ The World Bank. 'When I grow up, I'll be a teacher.' *The new ambitions of Congolese schoolchildren now that school is free*. 2020. www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/16/the-newambitions-of-congolese-schoolchildren-now-that-school-is-free

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

and protection, need to be met, going hand in hand with the provision of quality education and health care needed for sustainable development.

4.1.7 Gender inequality

Gender inequality runs across all the identified binding constraints as well as it is cross cutting for all the different dimensions of poverty. In international rankings, such as the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, the countries where women have the fewest freedoms, including economic rights, are also shown to be the poorest and most conflict-ridden in the world.¹⁴¹ Women's poverty is fuelled by discrimination in employment, limited access to resources, and not the least by gender stereotypes that limit their participation in decision-making and impose an unequal burden of domestic work.¹⁴² Significant gender gaps do form after early childhood, notably in education, health care, economic activity, legal status, land tenure, property ownership, inheritance practices, and decision-making authority. Women and especially pregnant women are highly represented in poverty statistics. The high fertility rate keeps women and their children in poverty, to address the issue there is a need for more information and access to modern contraceptive methods, so that women can have control over family planning. To address the problem of gender inequality in DRC, women need to be empowered and part of decision making on all levels of society. Women need to have protection against violence and abuse, as well as their legal rights to own land and their property rights protected. Furthermore, increased opportunities and financial inclusion.

4.2 Concluding Remarks

The conclusions from the MDPA are important points of departure for strategic decisions within Sida for relevant and efficient interventions that sustainably reduce poverty. Multidimensional poverty is experienced differently by each person who lives in poverty, nevertheless through this multidimensional poverty analysis the aim was to better understand the poverty that most of the Congolese population are experiencing. The country continues to suffer from multidimensional fragility, given the highly volatile humanitarian, insecurity, and protection situation, with the several reoccurring conflicts in the country. However, poverty is not restricted to areas of conflict and the poverty levels remain very high all over the country. In general poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and women and girls are poorer than men and boys. The poverty in the DRC reaches extreme levels resulting in reoccurring humanitarian crisis and one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world. Multidimensional poverty is high and human development indicators are among the lowest in the world. The analysis has revealed that there is a great need for development cooperation in the DRC to address the root causes of the humanitarian and development needs. Since the last MDPA conducted in 2018 and 2020, little has changed in terms of the nature of the poverty prevalent in the country. Despite a change in government and renewed efforts from all concerned actors there is little room for optimism while the political situation in the East continues and while much needed reforms both in the tax system and government expenditure are neglected. Lack of good governance continues to be a major impediment to progress for the country. It is commonly said that this immense country is too rich to be poor. The DRC is a vast and rich country with natural resources in abundance, all of which have great potential for poverty reduction. However, these natural resources continue to be underdeveloped and mismanaged not to mention other ills such as continued deforestation, biodiversity loss, overfishing, unsustainable waste management and degradation of agricultural land. Local

¹⁴¹ USAID. *A briefer: Gender inequality causes poverty*. 2021. [A Briefer: Gender Inequality Causes Poverty1 \(banyanglobal.com\)](https://www.banyanglobal.com/)

¹⁴² UN Women. *How can gender equality reduce poverty?*. 2024. [How can gender equality reduce poverty? | UN Women – Headquarters](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2024/1/202401-how-can-gender-equality-reduce-poverty)

and regional conflicts over natural resources further exacerbate the situation. Peace and stability are precursors to development and the DRC is no exception.

4.2.1 Why are people remaining in poverty

The historical effects are possible reasons for the extreme multidimensional poverty situation of today. The Independence of the DRC and other African countries happened very fast and with little preparation, borders were drawn with no consideration of ethnic groups or economic viability which has led to the conflicts, wars and political instability which are prevalent even today. The DRC gained independence from Belgium in 1960, after years of oppression and brutal violations of human rights.

There are those who argue that the situation in the DRC has deteriorated since independence with increased poverty and human suffering. One explanation could be the kleptocratic governance model which has continued through the years irrespective of change of leadership with the legacy having been passed on to the next generation of leaders with decades of conflicts, wars, political instability, and poverty continuing. Another explanation could be the continued involvement of external interests in the extractive industry.

DRCs abundance of natural resources, and its central position in Africa, sharing borders with 9 countries, triggers a great interest by many different - legitimate and illegitimate - actors who want a share of the wealth of minerals and other resources. There is a long history of conflict, grievances and mistrust in the region. Rather than seeing a solution, there has been an escalation of the regional tensions the last few years, which fuels the conflict in the eastern DRC. Furthermore, the authoritarian political and economic model have not been conducive to human development in the DRC either. The common feature through this analysis has consistently been bad governance and corruption as the main cause to poverty and the main constraints to end poverty. Peace and political stability are fundamental for human development to be possible together with a stable governance. Moreover, the above identified binding constraints need to be addressed for sustainable and inclusive long-term development to be possible in the DRC. Issues of gender inequality, human capital, infrastructure, and financial inclusion which are key mechanisms to reduce poverty, strengthen resilience, and promote prosperity.

4.2.2 Future prospects - How will the poverty situation look tomorrow

In the Current Path forecast, the DR Congo will not be able to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concerning the eradication of extreme poverty. If no drastic changes are made toward peace, gender equality and sustainable development, the only possible outcome is a continuation of poverty, human rights violations and suffering. Despite all this, the potentials and natural wealth of the DRC along with the current formation of a new government, there is careful optimism about the future. With the right investments across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus and support to enabling catalytic interventions it will be possible for the Congolese population to prosper.

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Consultations / Actor meetings

- Actors meeting in Bukavu, held by the Embassy of Sweden. September 2023
- Actors meeting in Lubumbashi, held by the Embassy of Sweden. September 2023
- Actors meeting in Kananga, held by the Embassy of Sweden. September 2023
- Actors meeting in Kinshasa, held by the Embassy of Sweden. September 2023

Annex 1: Binding Constraints

1. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>WEAK INSTITUTIONS AND POOR GOVERNANCE</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint: • Major binding constraint to inclusive growth and poverty reduction • Hamper economic progress and deepen corruption • Contributes to dysfunctional financial system/public administration • Contributes to difficulties in delivering basic social services (infrastructure, education, health) to all • Hampers ability to reduce/respond to humanitarian crisis as well as the security situation WHO: • All citizens of DRC • Public sector institutions • Decision-makers • Civil society organisations	WHAT: • Strengthen institutional capacity and implementation of governance mechanisms • Enhance transparency, accountability and rule of law • Increased domestic resource mobilisation to ensure adequate financing for institutional reforms, capacity building efforts and implementation of governance mechanisms in order to deliver essential services (infrastructure, education, health) • Ensure that financial flows are transparent, accountable and effectively utilized to achieve outcomes

2. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>CORRUPTION</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint: • Corruption, lack of transparency and misuse of public funds as well as capital flight, tax evasion and smuggling severely impeded sustainable growth and economic development • Diverts resources needed to invest in social services (education, health, infrastructure etc.) • Causing losses in government revenues (in particular the mining sector) • Weakens the social contract - undermine people's trust in government and institutions WHO: • All people in DRC, particularly the poor and vulnerable • Persistent in all levels of society • Public institutions and civil servants • Enterprises, particularly in the mining sector	WHAT: • Leverage digitalization to enhance governance, increase efficiency and mitigate corruption • Implement digital solutions in tax collection, administrative processes and financial services, in order to streamline operations, reduce opportunities for corruption and enhance transparency • Judicial reform and allocation of sufficient resources to the judiciary system to support improvements of the system

3. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>CONFLICT AND INSTABILITY</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint: • Deadly violence, human rights abuses, sexual- and gender based violence including rape and torture • Loss of shelter and income, maintain people in poverty • Impede economic activity, particularly cross-border trade • Internal displacement, refugees • Creates tension and undermines social cohesion between groups and populations in particular in border areas WHO: • People living in conflict affected areas, particularly women, girls and boys in Eastern DRC • Communities / people in border areas • Members of armed groups • Internally displaced people	WHAT: • Strengthen state security through public investment and more efficient use of public revenues • Demobilise and reintegrate armed actors • Conflict resolution (for instance natural resource management) and peace-building efforts to rebuild trust and social cohesion • Protection measures to rebuild people's sense of security • Diplomacy to seek political solutions
4. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>NATURAL RESOURCES AND LIMITED ACCESS TO LAND</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint: • Poor management of natural resources and the limited access to land is a major obstacle that severely restrict long-term poverty reduction • Climate change, land erosion, pollution and poor waste management • Lack of access to land, land rights and natural resources are drivers to conflict and humanitarian crisis • Over extensive farming techniques damages land • Malnutrition and food insecurity WHO: • Women • Indigenous people • Farmers • People in the mining sector	• Land reforms to make sure people, in particular women, get access to land • Improve farming techniques, increase agriculture productivity • Increase budget allocation to small-scale agriculture • Strengthen financial inclusion adapted to needs of small-scale agricultural farmers • Agriculture subsidize at community level • Promote local actors to improve local production and commercial markets, strengthen state-led agricultural monitoring • Promulgate and enforce laws on land rights, law of administrative boundaries and agriculture law • Harmonize land management between customary authorities and political and administrative authorities • Support social cohesion and local conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve land conflicts
5. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint:	• Improved connectivity, for example quality roads between provinces through managed initiatives such as the infrastructure-for-mineral deal, to promote trade and inclusive growth

• Isolation of communities impedes sharing of information, goods and services which ultimately reduces market activity • Poor condition of transportation infrastructure aggravates social and economic inequalities across provinces and between urban and rural areas, impedes sharing of information and trading of goods and services • Lack of electricity impairs health, education and income-generating potential • Lack of financial infrastructure and financial inclusive hinder economic growth and social development WHO: • All people, particularly in rural or remote areas • Mining communities • Government	• Enhance access to electricity through increased power connections, rehabilitate the hydroelectrical dams, government reforms / measures • Enhance access to improved water sources, ensure adequate financing of water and sanitation • Investments in digitalisation to address financial infrastructure and address connectivity challenges
6. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>LOW HUMAN CAPITAL</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint: • Constant high fertility rates • Poorly educated and unhealthy population is an unused resource that hinders economic development and growth by impeding employment • Limited healthcare infrastructure and non-functioning systems increases risks and prolongs outbreaks of infectious diseases • Widespread malnutrition, financial constraints • High maternal and neonatal mortality • Shocks in term of extreme health costs risks sliding people deeper into poverty WHO: • Children, particularly girls • Pregnant women • Women giving births and their infants • Labour force, particularly the youth • Internally Displaced People	• Improve socio-economic conditions to reduce fertility rates • Decrease maternal and infant mortality • Prioritize and improve quality of education and healthcare including adequate equipment and skilled staff • Investments in education and sustainable job-creation • Use the youth's potential as an asset to generate growth and sustainable development • Ensure basic human needs are met (such as food security, water, shelter, security)
7. BINDING CONSTRAINT: <u>GENDER INEQUALITY</u>	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO ADDRESS THE BINDING CONSTRAINT – INCLUDING FINANCIAL FLOWS
Consequences of binding constraint: Cross-cutting through all above-mentioned binding constraints and dimensions of poverty.	• Combat stereotypic gender norms • Reduce gender gap notably in education, health care, economic activity, legal status, land tenure, property ownership, inheritance practices, and decision-making authority • Reduce fertility rates through improved access to information and modern contraceptive methods

WHO: • Women and girls • Pregnant women	• Empowerment of women; increase participation in decision making processes • Increased access to resources including land and finance for women • Ensure protection from violence and abuse • Ensure protection of basic human rights including legal rights to land and property rights
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