



IN BRIEF...

The democratic republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the world's poorest countries, a situation that has been exacerbated by civil war as well as hostilities and genocide in its neighbouring countries. Important progress has been made, but the current peace process is fragile and the challenges are many. Sweden is contributing to the continuation of peaceful development and to efforts made to alleviate suffering amongst the millions of people hit by the national crisis.

Why does Sweden provide support to the Democratic Republic of Congo?

The DR Congo, formerly Zaire, became independent in 1960. Almost half a century later, in 2006, the country held its second general election.

Poverty is severe in the DR Congo, and has deteriorated over the past few years. Even though a peace agreement has been signed and there is an official peace, hostilities are still raging in the eastern part of the country. The crisis has been called one of the deadliest since the Second World War. Because the root causes of the conflicts remain, the peace is unstable. Moreover, the conflicts, in combination with years of misrule, have led to the collapse of many sectors of society such as health and education. The majority of the population lack access to healthcare and medicines, and under 50 per cent of children go to school. Almost a third of the population are in acute need of aid.

The precarious situation means that not even 10 per cent of the country's arable land is farmed, a problem that is growing as more and more refugees

return to their home villages. An estimated 1.6 million people live as internal refugees.

The national economy has long been in a state of constant collapse. DR Congo boasts enormous natural resources, such as copper, diamonds, gold, petroleum, uranium, iron ore and coal, but the revenue generated by these riches does not filter down to the people.

Although the DR Congo has signed the most important human rights conventions, it is poor at complying with their provisions. Children and women are particularly in danger. Sexual violence and other serious violations such as torture, plunder and arson are widespread.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up to investigate these abuses has come under criticism as many of its members have been involved in serious breaches of human rights. The hope is that the process will regain momentum in an independent way under a new, democratically elected government.

The DR Congo is a vast country

with many neighbours: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Because of the country's size and geopolitical position, what happens in the DR Congo has a huge impact on developments in the region as a whole.

How long has Sweden been providing support to DR Congo?

Sweden has had a commitment to the DR Congo since the end of the 1800s, when Swedish missionaries started to settle there. For many years, different churches were subsequently given support by Sida for their efforts to improve education, health, agriculture, forestry, the environment, and gender equality. Sida started to give humanitarian aid to the DR Congo in response to the Rwandan genocide in 1994, when many people fled to the eastern regions of the country.

What does Sida do in DR Congo?

The DR Congo is included in Sida's strategy for the Great Lake region, along with Rwanda and Burundi. The strategy is due to remain in effect until the end of 2008. The overall goal for the work being done with the DR Congo, as it is all for development cooperation, is to help poor people improve their living conditions. The two pillars upon which these efforts rest are regional stability and cooperation, and the development of a democratic culture based on respect for human rights.

Progress in the peace process and the economic reforms introduced by the interim government have encouraged many donors to commit, or plan to commit to more long term support.

The multilateral donors (UN organisations and the EU) account for most of the aid being paid to the DR Congo. Britain is one of the largest individual donors. Before independence, the DR Congo was a Belgian colony which the Belgian King Leopold had as his private property. Belgium, the USA, Canada, Japan and China also provide aid. Sweden is the largest Nordic donor, the aid it provides being channelled via the UN, other international bodies (such as the Red Cross) and Swedish NGOs.

Aid has mainly been targeted at efforts to shore up the peace process and to provide emergency help for victims of the war. For some parts of the population, this has been essential for their survival.

A large number of refugee children in eastern Congo have, for example, been given teaching through the Nordic Refugee Council with support from Sida. Save the Children has also received a grant for its work rehabilitating child soldiers and other peace-promotion incentives. The Pentecostal Mission's Development Cooperation is helping to

equip schools and improve teaching for hundreds of schools through its sister church in the country. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, Diakonia and the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation are also being funded by Sida for their work in the country.

Conditions for those working with humanitarian aid in the DR Congo have been very arduous. The unstable situation makes their work dangerous and it is often difficult for the aid workers to reach people in need. The DR Congo is as big as Western Europe but there is an almost total lack of decent roads. Most of the emergency aid must therefore be flown into the country.

Sweden's development cooperation with DR Congo will continue to be based on humanitarian efforts and the long term promotion of peace. The purpose of the former will be to make it easier for refugees to return home, while the latter will centre around building up a society from scratch. The cornerstones of Swedish support are increased democracy, respect for human rights, education, and the rule of law. Sida is also preparing support for a separate HIV/AIDS programme.

Swedish aid is provided most efficiently with the help of other donors. An

action plan drawn up by the UN offers a unique opportunity for large-scale collaboration, as now, for the first time, there is a nationwide picture of the country's needs. The plan presents some 330 projects around the country, including ones for food, healthcare and education. Aid will also be designed to help strengthen protection for vulnerable people, to facilitate the return of refugees, and to improve equality.

Sweden gives some SEK 80 million to a joint fund that is to partially finance the work, the full cost of which is estimated at around SEK 4,500 million. In charge of the fund is the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Sweden is also providing backing for the 2006 election, and has supported a tripartite project with the DR Congo and South Africa to draw up an inventory of the number of state employees. Other major projects include support to education through UNICEF and regional media support through Panos.

To add to their problems, the DR Congo has an extremely large foreign debt. Sweden has written off two thirds of the debt, equivalent to 1.5 billion SEK.

BASIC FACTS

Area, km ²	2,345,410
Capital	Kinshasa
Population 2004 millions	55.9
Expected population 2015, millions	78.0
Population growth (per cent)	3.0
Per capita GDP (USD ppp* 2004)	705
Average GDP/annual growth 1990–2004 (per cent)	–6.0
Total aid from all countries, million USD, 2004	1,815
Total aid as proportion of GDP, 2004 (per cent)	27.4
Adult literacy (per cent)	67.2
Life expectancy at birth (years)	43.5
Number of doctors per 100,000 population	11
Access to adequate sanitation (per cent of population)	30
Access to clean water (per cent of population)	46
People with HIV/AIDS in the 15–49 age group (per cent)	3.2
Ranking in Human Development Report (out of 177 countries) (Sweden)	167 (5)

Sources: 2006 Sida Annual Report
Human Development Report 2006

COOPERATION IN FIGURES

Sida's development cooperation with the DR Congo in 2006

Costs, SEK

Health	685,000
Education	14,771,000
Research	0
Human rights and democratic governance	69,007,000
Conflicts, peace and security	11,992,000
Humanitarian assistance	158,277,000
Infrastructure	4,000
Trade, industry and financial systems	91,000
Natural resources and the environment	434,000
Budget support for poverty reduction	0
Other sectors	4,323,000
Total	259,585,000

Five people from the DR Congo attended Sida's international courses in 2006.

*ppp=purchasing power parity (purchasing power taking into account exchange rates; used to compare living standards in different countries.)

Per capita GDP in Sweden (USD ppp 2004) = 29,541

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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