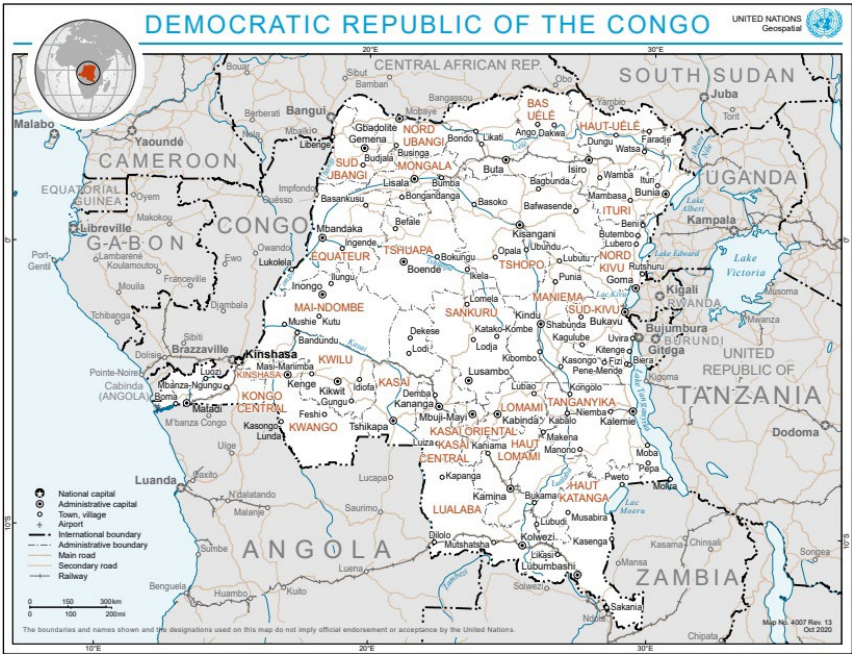


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Democratic Republic of the Congo

Socioeconomic conditions in Kinshasa



Ministry of Immigration
and Integration

The Danish
Immigration Service

This brief report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The brief report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this brief report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The brief report is a synthesis of information gathered from different sources, and it brings together condensed information in a relevant manner for the reader's COI needs and it organises information together thematically to form a coherent whole of the topic in question, instead of listing or quoting information source by source.

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Executive summary

In recent years, the long-lasting conflict in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has intensified and thus increased civilian casualties, as well as the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Although many IDPs remain in proximity to their home provinces, some also seek refuge in the urban areas of the DRC, including Kinshasa, the country's largest and capital city.

It is a challenge for many Congolese to reach Kinshasa from other parts of the country. The Congolese Constitution guarantees freedom of movement, but government officers and other armed groups have imposed unlawful travel restrictions on travellers. In addition, the underdeveloped road network in the DRC means that the only realistic option for traveling cross-country is by air.

Rapid urbanisation and influx of newcomers have increased the cost of living in Kinshasa, and thus the city has the highest housing costs in the country. This means that most *kinois*¹ have resorted to self-built informal settlements in flood-prone areas that often lack basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, electricity as well as proper roads. Many people living in these exposed areas are subject to a crisis of food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

There are many orphanages in Kinshasa, but it is nevertheless difficult for orphans in the city to access the orphanages. Conditions in orphanages are inadequate, and there are rarely enough beds, food and staff.

The educational system in the DRC is of poor quality and many children – especially girls – do not attend school. This is mainly because many children have to travel long and unsafe distances to attend school, even in Kinshasa. Even though primary school is free in principle, expenses on school uniforms and materials prevents many parents from sending their children to school.

The vast majority of *kinois* earn their living through the informal sector, as jobs in the formal sector are few and require both educational background and a social network. Women continue to be discriminated against in the labour market and experience high degrees of sexual harassment.

The Congolese healthcare system is dysfunctional and out-of-pocket expenses means that a majority of the residents in Kinshasa cannot afford adequate treatment.

Women still face discriminatory practices and laws in a highly patrilineal society, despite recent progress. These discriminatory attitudes towards women have contributed to an overall low gender equality and widespread sexual and gender based violence. Single women without a male support network are often perceived negatively, they find themselves in a more vulnerable position and many decide to engage in transactional sex in order to gain access to shelter and labour.

¹ Residents of Kinshasa are called *kinois*. Landinfo, *Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 9

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Introduction

This brief report describes the socioeconomic conditions for people living in Kinshasa, including for newcomers to the city. This includes the general security situation in the city as well as the role of social networks, such as ethnic, religious and family networks in the daily life of the residents of the city, the *kinois*. Moreover, the report considers key socioeconomic indicators in Kinshasa, including poverty, food security, water, electricity and sanitation, housing, employment, education and healthcare services as well as freedom of movement. Finally, the report provides information on the situation for women in Kinshasa with focus on discriminatory laws and practices in the city, gender based violence and sexual abuse as well as the situation for single women without a male support network.

The report is based on information from publicly available written sources, comprised of carefully selected news reports by credible news outlets and reports published by the United Nations, the World Bank, NGOs and humanitarian organisations. These sources are supplemented with information obtained through three interviewed sources: one located in Goma, DRC and two sources located in Kinshasa, DRC. All sources have been identified on the basis of their extensive and updated knowledge about the situation in Kinshasa and the DRC in general, in addition to the topics relevant to this brief report. During the research phase, it proved difficult to find updated sources on the topics relevant to the Terms of Reference (ToR) both in English and French.

The sources were briefed about the purpose of the interview and informed that their statements would be included in a publicly available report in accordance with their preferred referencing. The summary of the interviews were forwarded to the sources for approval with the possibility to amend, comment or correct their statements. All but one source responded and approved their statements. The source in question was informed that in case the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) did not receive a response to its request for approval within a specific deadline, DIS would consider the meeting notes approved. The meeting notes are thus included in the report. The sources were asked how reference might be made to them in the report. One source requested to be referenced anonymously for the sake of discretion and upholding a tolerable working situation, as well as for personal safety. All sources are referenced in the report according to their own request.

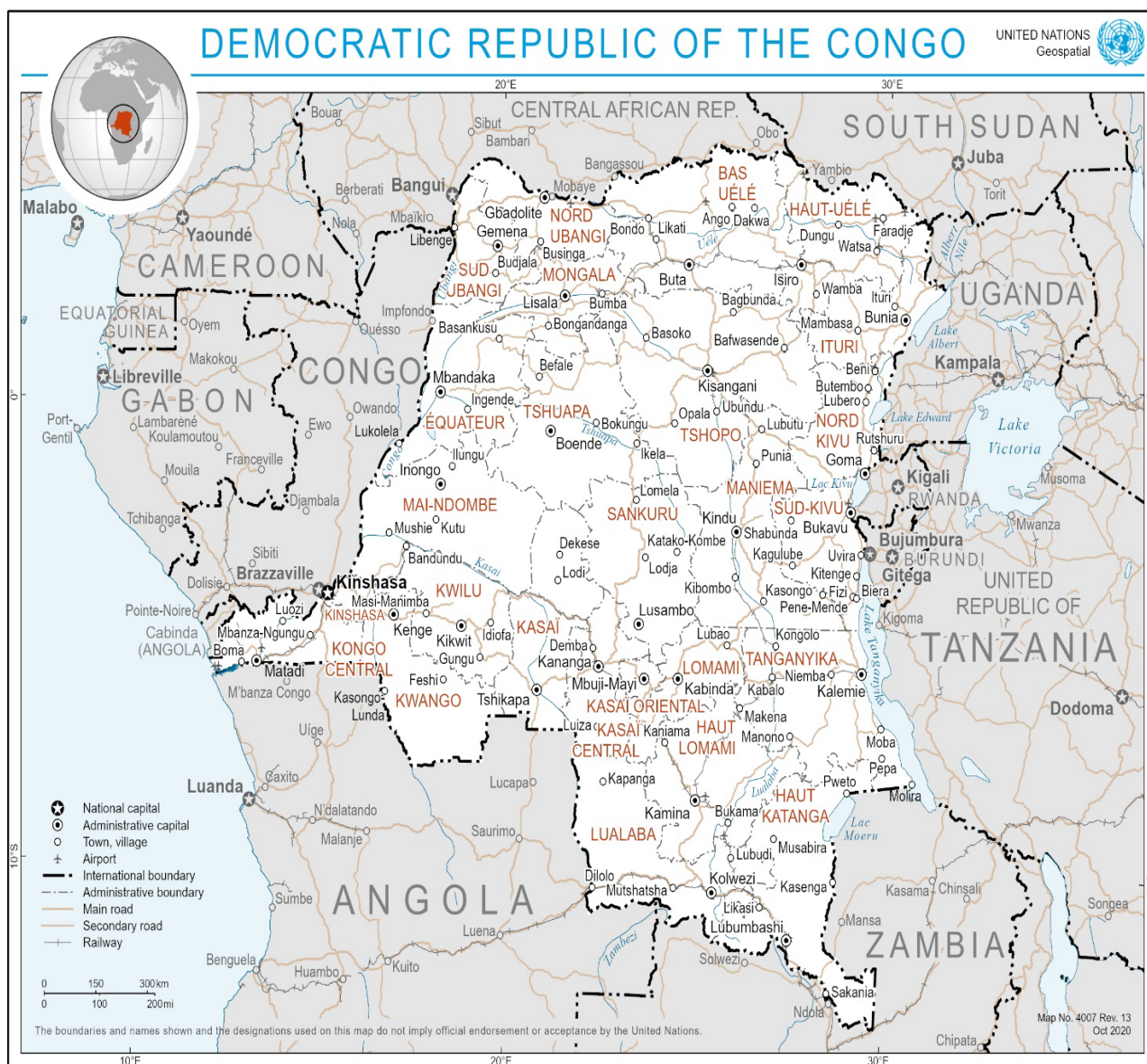
The report is a synthesis of information obtained from interviews as well as written material. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The statements of the interviewed sources are found in their full extent in Annex 2. For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the minutes of the interview in Annex 2 have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are included in Annex 1.

During the interview, the sources may have highlighted issues that are not addressed in the ToR. As these issues could be relevant to refugee status determination, they are included in the meeting notes in Annex 2, but they are not addressed in the report. The report has been externally peer reviewed in accordance with the EASO (now EUAA) COI Report Methodology.² The research and editing of this report was finalised on 28 September 2022.

² EASO, *EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, June 2019, [url](#)

Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
CAHF	Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa
CSSN	Caisse Social Sécurité Nationale
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EASO	European Asylum Support Office (Now: EUAA, European Union Agency for Asylum)
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
GITOC	Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime
IAG	Illegal Armed Groups
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNC	The Congolese National Police (Police Nationale Congolaise)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USDOS	United States Department of State
WHO	World Health Organisation

Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo³

³ UN, *Democratic Republic of the Congo*, Map No. 4007 Rev. 13, October 2020, [url](#)

1. Background information

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the largest country in Sub-Saharan Africa located in Central Africa, covering 2,267,048 sq km of land area.⁴ The country shares borders with Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. When the country gained independence from Belgium in 1960, it was named *Zaire* and the capital city *Léopoldville*. The former President Joseph Kabila changed Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and renamed the capital city to Kinshasa in 1997. The official language in the DRC is French, while different ethnic groups speak Lingala, Kingwana (Swahili dialect), Kikongo and Tshiluba.⁵

The major urban areas in the DRC are Kinshasa, Mbuji-Mayi, Lubumbashi, Kananga, Kisangani and Bukavu. Kinshasa is located in the West along the Congo River, while the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Taganyika are located in eastern region of the country.⁶ The distance between the west and east in the DRC is approximately 2,000 km.

The DRC has witnessed a high population growth relative to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years.⁷ In 2019, 45% of the Congolese population lived in urban areas and according to projections, this share will reach an estimated 64% of the population by 2050.⁸ Kinshasa accounts for most of the urbanisation, and the city has witnessed an exponential growth with an average 6.6% annual growth rate.⁹ At the time of independence, Kinshasa's population was estimated at around 200,000 inhabitants, and in 2015, the population was estimated at 10.6 million. Kinshasa is projected to overtake Lagos and Cairo as Africa's most populous city by 2030.¹⁰ It should however be noted that the last census in Kinshasa was conducted in 1984, and as such, there are no exact statistics available regarding the population of the city.¹¹

The DRC is the third largest poor population in the world due to its population growth and unsustainable economic growth. The population growth is estimated at three percent annually from 1961 to 2020 with a

⁴ CIA, *The World Factbook, Congo, Democratic Republic of the*, 7 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵ CIA, *The World Factbook, Congo, Democratic Republic of the*, 7 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶ CIA, *The World Factbook, Congo, Democratic Republic of the*, 7 September 2022, [url](#)

⁷ ISS, *Waking the sleeping giant: Development pathways for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 2050*, February 2021, [url](#), p.10

⁸ ISS, *Waking the sleeping giant: Development pathways for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 2050*, February 2021, [url](#), p.10

⁹ The World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo Urbanization Review: Productive and Inclusive Cities for an Emerging Congo*, 2018, [url](#), p. 13; Bédécarrats et al., "Building commons to cope with chaotic urbanization? Performance and sustainability of decentralized water services in the outskirts of Kinshasa", *Journal of Hydrology, Volume 573*, June 2019, [url](#), p. 1096

¹⁰ Bédécarrats et al. "Building commons to cope with chaotic urbanization? Performance and sustainability of decentralized water services in the outskirts of Kinshasa", *Journal of Hydrology, Volume 573*, June 2019, [url](#), p. 1097; ISS, *Waking the sleeping giant: Development pathways for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 2050*, February 2021, [url](#), p.10

¹¹ Landinfo, *Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 8-9

fertility rate of 6.2 children per woman.¹² In 2018, it was predicted that if DRC continued with similar per capita GDP growth, approximately 60 million Congolese would live in extreme poverty in 2030.¹³

The poverty levels are disparate in the different provinces with extreme poverty concentrated in central and the northwestern provinces.¹⁴ In 2012, Kinshasa and other urban areas had lower average poverty rates as 52.8% of the city population lived under the national poverty line.¹⁵ In the years 2012-2018, the poverty rate increased from 52.8 to 64%.¹⁶ In 2017, Kinshasa hosted 7 million of the poor people in DRC, accounting for 12% of the entire poor population in the country.¹⁷

¹² The World Bank, *Country Partnership Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo for the Period of FY22-26*, 24 January 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹³ The World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic, Policy Priorities for Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in a Post-Conflict Country and Fragile State*, March 2018, [url](#), p. ii

¹⁴ The World Bank, *Macro Poverty Outlook, Country-by-Country Analysis and Projections for the Developing World*, 22 April 2022, [url](#), p. 224:

¹⁵ The World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic, Policy Priorities for Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in a Post-Conflict Country and Fragile State*, March 2018, [url](#), p. 25

¹⁶ The World Bank, *Country Partnership Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo for the Period of FY22-26*, 24 January 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁷ The World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic, Policy Priorities for Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in a Post-Conflict Country and Fragile State*, March 2018, [url](#), p. 26-27

2. General security situation

The security situation in the DRC remains influenced by the armed conflict between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the Illegal Armed Groups (IAGs) in the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika since the 1990s. The current presence of IAGs in the eastern provinces further threatens the security and stability in DRC and the neighbouring countries Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.¹⁸

On 6 May 2021, President Félix Tshisekedi declared a state of siege in the eastern provinces, as a response to the escalating security situation. The government imposed, as a temporary measure, martial law in the provinces, meaning civilian institutions were suspended, civil administrative authorities replaced with military officers and certain fundamental rights and freedoms were restricted.¹⁹ The Congolese Constitution allows the President to declare a state of siege ‘when grave circumstances threaten, in an immediate manner, the independence or the integrity of the national territory’.²⁰

The state of siege is still in force and has been extended 22 times despite an initial 30-days period with the intention of protecting civilian and combatting IAGs.²¹ According to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the efforts by the government and the FARDC with support from United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), did not improve the security situation for civilians in the eastern provinces instead it deteriorated. The attacks on civilians and expansion of IAGs continued,²² Human Rights Watch recorded 1,600 civilian deaths between May and December 2021,²³ and AI reported the number of civilians killed by armed groups to have doubled over the last year.²⁴ The IAGs were responsible for unlawful killings, kidnappings, torture, gender-based violence, destruction of property and the abduction and recruitment of child soldiers as well as subjecting adults to forced labour.²⁵

The current estimation of IDPs in the DRC is 5.5 million, of those 1.5 million were forced to flee from the violence in 2021.²⁶ According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the DRC now hosts the largest number of IDPs on the continent.²⁷ The ongoing conflict in the eastern provinces further exposes refugees to being internally displaced or killed.²⁸

¹⁸ AI, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Justice and freedoms under siege in North-Kivu and Ituri*, 10 May 2022, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

²⁰ Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la République du Congo*, 18 February 2006, [url](#), p. 32, art. 85

²¹ AI, *DRC: One year on, ‘State of Siege’ used as a tool to crush dissent*, 10 May 2022, [url](#)

²² UNSC, *Letter dated 10 June 2022 from the Group of Experts extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2582 (2021) addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 14 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

²³ HRW, *Annual report on the human rights situation in 2021, Congo, Democratic Republic*, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁴ AI, *DRC: One year on, ‘State of Siege’ used as a tool to crush dissent*, 10 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁵ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

²⁶ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

²⁷ UN News, *UNHCR alarmed by growing death toll among displaced in eastern DR Congo*, 22 July 2022, [url](#)

²⁸ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

2.1 Security in Kinshasa

It proved difficult to gather reliable and updated information from international sources on the security situation in Kinshasa.

The responsible law enforcement agency for public order in the DRC is the Congolese National Police (PNC), who operates under the Ministry of Interior.²⁹ According to the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC), Kinshasa has since 2000 experienced increased criminality due to youth gangs, poverty and lack of law enforcement.³⁰ The same source mentioned these street gangs, also known as *Kulunas*, to be comprised of teenage boys and young men in gangs of 10 to 20 members, who are involved in organised crime.³¹ They first appeared in the poorest areas of Kinshasa, such as Yolo, Limete, Matete and Makala, but over time, they expanded to the rest of the city.³² Once the *Kulunas* are present in an area, they take territorial control, exerting their dominance by serious violence, including robbery and violent assaults.³³ According to GITOC, *Kulunas* are reported to attack strangers passing through their territories, but unlikely to attack the residents.³⁴

In response, the government attempted to dissolve the *Kulunas* in Kinshasa with the PNC in charge of the operations. The first operation *Likofi* was launched in 2013 and despite human rights violations during this phase, the second stage of the operation was operationalised with an extended mandate to target urban criminality in all of DRC.³⁵ This was followed by *operation Likofi IV* in Kinshasa, in 2018.³⁶ Human Rights Watch reported in 2014, investigating the first operation, that the police used ‘disproportionate use of force’.³⁷ The same source found the police to have committed human rights violations, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions and intimidation of family members and witnesses to abuse.³⁸ In addition, 52 young boys and men were executed, while 33 forcefully disappeared from 2013-2014. During the latest operation IV, the police killed 27 suspects and seven people were never found.³⁹

According to the GITOC, the *Kulunas* are perceived as labour force for political parties, as they are able to protect politicians, interrupt public gatherings and intimidate political rivals, which is in demand during election times.⁴⁰ The same source noted that *Kulunas* collaborate with the PNC, as they take part in illegal activities for the police. When they perform certain tasks for the police, they are referred to ‘*Kulunas* in

²⁹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

³⁰ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 14

³¹ EASO, *Operation Likofi during 2018 in Kinshasa*, 6 January 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³² Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 4

³³ EASO, *Updates on the security situation in Kinshasa between 1 January 2020 – 30 June 2021*, 22 June 2021, [url](#), p. 4

³⁴ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 2

³⁵ EASO, the European Union Agency for Asylum, *Operation Likofi during 2018 in Kinshasa*, 6 January 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³⁶ EASO, *Operation Likofi during 2018 in Kinshasa*, 6 January 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷ EASO, *Operation Likofi during 2018 in Kinshasa*, 6 January 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³⁸ HRW, *Operation Likofi, Police killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa*, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

³⁹ HRW, *Operation Likofi, Police killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa*, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 8

uniform’.⁴¹ A resident from Lingwala, a district of Kinshasa, stated to GITOC, that the Kulunas recruit the children of PNC officers.⁴²

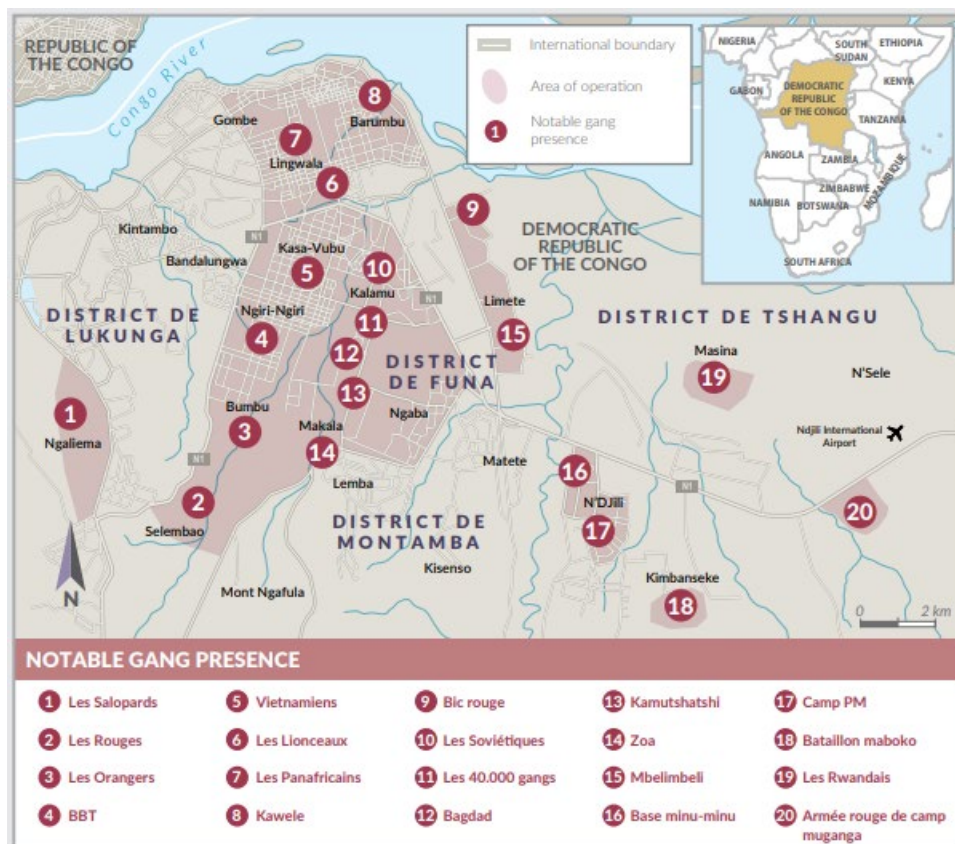


Figure 1. Map of the main Kuluna gangs in Kinshasa.⁴³

⁴¹ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 9

⁴² Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 4

⁴³ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *Criminals or Vigilantes? The Kuluna Gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, May 2021, [url](#), p. 5

3. Social networks in Kinshasa

In a society where the state's ability to provide a safety net is highly limited, the citizens of Kinshasa have to resort to other means of establishing a living under harsh circumstances.⁴⁴ In a Congolese context, the concept of *débrouillardisme* is widely used as a term to describe the ins and outs of living on a day-to-day basis and constantly seeking new opportunities and renegotiating existing arrangements.⁴⁵ According to anthropologist Lesley Braun, developing and drawing upon one's social network is a central component of *débrouillardisme* in Kinshasa because personal connections are crucial drivers of success in the city. Braun argues that holding a degree in medicine or law alone is not enough to survive in Kinshasa, emphasising the importance of social networks as they can play an essential role in one's profession. In addition, they can provide income supplements in a city where income and salaries are unstable and irregular.⁴⁶

3.1 Language

There are four national languages spoken across the country, namely Kikongo, Tshiluba, Swahili and Lingala. Moreover, French is the official language, but not everyone speaks French as the language is primarily taught in schools. Lingala is the lingua franca in Kinshasa and other big cities in the country while Swahili is mainly spoken in the Eastern Provinces.⁴⁷ Although not a meaningful source of solidarity itself, language has become an important cultural identifier in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁴⁸

3.2 Family

In the DRC, the idea of a traditional commitment to family, lineage and other social bonds lives on. This ideal, however, is often challenged by the reality that most *kinois*⁴⁹ live very challenging lives and have limited access to resources. The reality is that most people in Kinshasa are not able to meet the ideals of solidarity, commitment and family. As such, families of people in need are often only able to provide very basic services such as a place to sleep, and guests are often expected to provide their own food.⁵⁰ Professor of Sociology at l'Université de Kinshasa, José Bazonzi further elaborated that solidarity within family networks are reciprocal, meaning that they are only activated if the person in question has maintained a good relationship with his or her family. This means that a family in Kinshasa can also refuse to help a newcomer to the city if the relationships has not been maintained.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Afia Mama: 13; 17; Braun, Lesley Nicole, "'Débrouillez-Vous': Women's Work, Transactional Sex, and the Politics of Social Networks.", *Ethnos* Vol. 83. No. 1, 2018, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁴⁵ Braun, Lesley Nicole, "'Débrouillez-Vous': Women's Work, Transactional Sex, and the Politics of Social Networks.", *Ethnos* Vol. 83. No. 1, 2018, [url](#), pp. 1-2; Landinfo, Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 15

⁴⁶ Braun, Lesley Nicole, "'Débrouillez-Vous': Women's Work, Transactional Sex, and the Politics of Social Networks.", *Ethnos* Vol. 83. No. 1, 2018, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁷ José Bazonzi: 17

⁴⁸ José Bazonzi: 17

⁴⁹ Residents of Kinshasa are called *kinois*. Landinfo, *Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁰ Landinfo, *Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 14

⁵¹ José Bazonzi: 4

3.3 Ethnicity

According to Landinfo 2015, the majority of people in Kinshasa do not have the means and resources to show solidarity with others from the same ethnic background. This does not mean that people do not engage in meaningful relationships with others of the same ethnicity, but in non-conflict zones such as Kinshasa, the solidarity and commitment toward others of the same ethnic background is no more pronounced than towards one's neighbour for example.⁵² According to Professor Bazonzi, it is only possible for a newcomer to Kinshasa to draw on their ethnic network if the people assisting the person in question are well-off and if the personal relationships between the newcomer and their ethnic network has been maintained.⁵³

Professor Bazonzi advised that it is often more difficult for people from the East of the DRC to settle and integrate in Kinshasa because they have little or no family on the city and often do not speak Lingala, the *lingua franca*, or even French. As such, Professor Bazonzi argued that a newcomer from the East is often regarded as 'a foreign person'.⁵⁴ Professor Bazonzi further stated that although settling in Kinshasa is generally more difficult for people from the East, there is little ethnic discrimination in the city. He explained that DRC is home to nearly 450 ethnic groups and many Congolese take pride in this diversity.⁵⁵

There is also potential risk factors attributed to one's ethnic or regional background in Kinshasa. The international humanitarian organisation in the DRC stated anyone perceived associated with Rwanda would face harsh discrimination in all parts of society. Moreover, the source stressed that this discrimination against Rwandaphone people happens all across the DRC.⁵⁶ Professor Bazonzi explained the Rwandaphone community in the DRC is perceived as foreign that has difficulties integrating into Congolese society.⁵⁷ As such, any person belonging to the Banya ethnic groups (Banyamulenge, Banyarwanda) as well as Hutus and Tutsis are at risk of being discriminated against and harassed, according to the International humanitarian organisation in the DRC. The ethnic Banya groups migrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to what is known today as the South Kivu province.⁵⁸ According to Genocide Watch, a non-profit organisation, the Banyamulenge have faced expulsion and had their citizenship revoked when the DRC was Zaire.⁵⁹ In 2004, the DRC adopted a new law on nationality allowing children of stateless or unknown parents to be granted Congolese citizenship.⁶⁰ Professor Bazonzi added that parts of the Banyamulenge do not possess Congolese citizenship.⁶¹

An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC explained that there has been tensions between Rwandaphone people and other ethnic groups in the DRC since colonial times, but since 2020, there has been a dramatic increase in hate speech against people associated with Rwanda on social media and elsewhere

⁵² Landinfo, Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 15

⁵³ José Bazonzi: 4

⁵⁴ José Bazonzi: 3; 4

⁵⁵ José Bazonzi: 7

⁵⁶ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 6

⁵⁷ José Bazonzi: 8; 9

⁵⁸ ACCORD, Democratic Republic of the Congo: *The situation of the Banyamulenge (2020 to March 2022)*, April 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁹ Genocide Watch, *Genocide Emergency: The Banyamulenge of the DRC*, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰ République Démocratique du Congo, Loi N° 04/024 Du 12 Novembre 2004, *Relative A La Nationalite Congolaise*, 12 November 2004, [url](#), art. 6-10

⁶¹ José Bazonzi: 8

due to the increasing tensions between the two countries. This increase in hate speech has escalated to violent attacks on Rwandophone people in the DRC, including in Kinshasa.⁶²

3.4 Religious and political networks

The Congolese society is overwhelmingly Christian,⁶³ and religious networks play an important role in the daily life of Kinshasa.⁶⁴ There are numerous denominations in Kinshasa, but the most important ones include the Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches.⁶⁵ These churches become another form of community and they often raise funds for the poorest members of the community as well as victims of disasters. According to Professor Bazonzi, churches can provide assistance in form of food and clothing, and in rare instances, shelter in churches or schools.⁶⁶

There are more than 600 political parties in the DRC, but only a dozen are considered as the main political parties. According to professor Bazonzi, one can only expect assistance from a political party if the person has a strong relation to the party such as being an employee or otherwise having a position within the party structure.⁶⁷ It is not allowed for political parties to organise along ethnic line, as they must have a national appeal.⁶⁸

⁶² An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC : 6

⁶³ USDOS, *2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴ José Bazonzi: 12; 15

⁶⁵ José Bazonzi: 12

⁶⁶ José Bazonzi: 12

⁶⁷ José Bazonzi: 12; 16

⁶⁸ José Bazonzi: 10; 16

4. Access to Kinshasa

4.1 Freedom of movement

The right to freedom of movement and internal movement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is protected under article 30 of the Congolese Constitution, which states that ‘all persons who are on the national territory have the right to circulate freely in it, to establish their residence in it, to leave it and to return to it, under the conditions established by the law’.⁶⁹ The government can restrict these rights at times deemed necessary. Reported by USDOS in 2022, state security forces established checkpoints on roads and at airports for security reasons during the Ebola and COVID-19 outbreak.⁷⁰ It was also required that travellers submit to control procedures at entry points by land, sea and air during domestic travel. According to USDOS, the state security forces required travellers to present travel orders from employers, which is not legally required nor related to COVID-19 or other precautionary health measures. Consequently, if travel orders were not presented, travellers would be subjected to detention and bribes.⁷¹ Freedom House stated that government forces and armed groups have imposed illegal tolls on travellers passing through their territories⁷² and for persons to take goods to markets, as well as local authorities collecting fees for boats to travel on the Congo River.⁷³

4.1.1 Infrastructure

The basic road infrastructure is in poor condition throughout the DRC. It is a challenge to travel or transport by land, as most parts of the country are poorly connected with each other. Despite continuous plans from the government to improve the country’s infrastructure, the road networks remain underdeveloped and poorly connected because implementation is often undermined by political resistance and corruption.⁷⁴ Noted by an international humanitarian organisation in the DRC, even in the scenario of improved road infrastructure many would refrain from traveling since it would involve the risk of falling victim to crimes.⁷⁵

According to an international humanitarian organisation in the DRC, the only realistic option for traveling cross-country (e.g. between the eastern provinces and Kinshasa) is by air.⁷⁶ While air transport allows for better travel between major cities, it does have its challenges with infrastructure, navigation equipment and safety regulations.⁷⁷ The European Union has banned all air carriers from the DRC to operate within the

⁶⁹ Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la République du Congo*, 18 February 2006, [url](#), p. 18, art. 30: “Toute personne qui se trouve sur le territoire national a le droit d’y circuler librement, d’y fixer résidence, de le quitter et d’y revenir, dans les conditions fixées par la loi.”

⁷⁰ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

⁷² Freedom House, *Annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2021*, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷³ USDOS, *2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 30 March 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴ BTI, *2022 Country Report — Congo, DR*, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵ An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: 24

⁷⁶ An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: 24

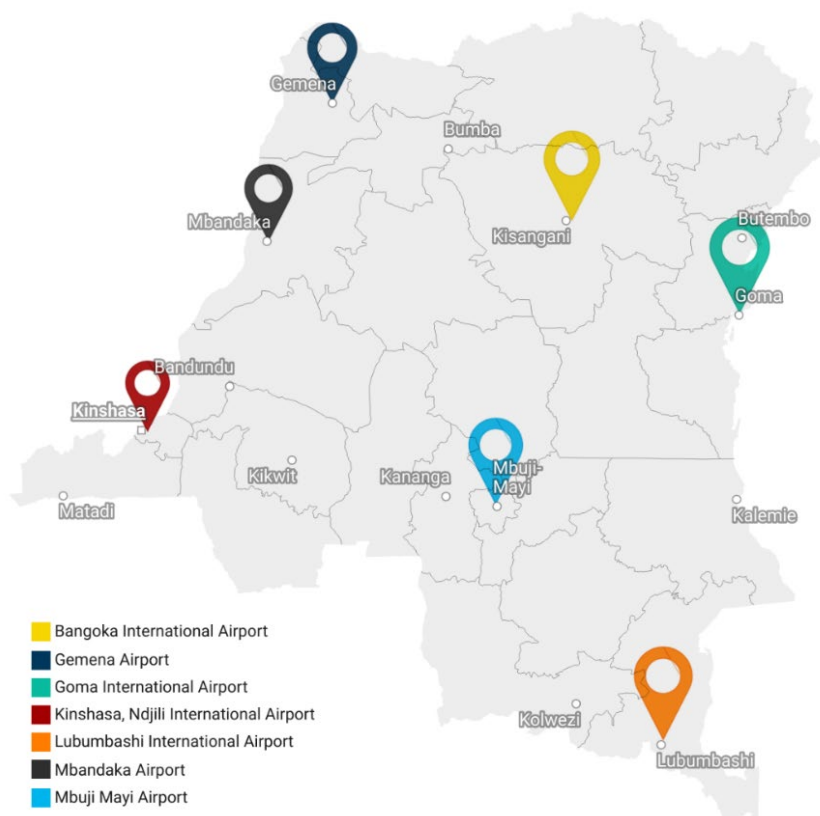
⁷⁷ The World Bank, *International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Grant in the Amount of SDR 36.9 Million (US\$52 Million Equivalent) to the Democratic Republic of Congo for a Goma Airport Safe Improvement Project*, 25 February 2015, [url](#)

Union, due to lack of conformity with international safety standards.⁷⁸ Additionally, the price of commercial flights are high and unaffordable for the average Congolese.⁷⁹

According to Flightrader24, the DRC has 16 operating airports⁸⁰ with Kinshasa N'Djili Airport (FIH) being the main international airport out of four.⁸¹ In a report by the World Bank from 2015, it is mentioned that all the airports are poorly managed and maintained.⁸²

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Main airports in DRC



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2. Map of main airports in DRC.⁸³

⁷⁸ EC, *Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1318/2014 of 11 December 2014 amending Regulation (EC) No 474/2006 establishing the Community list of air carriers which are subject to an operating ban within the Community Text with EEA relevance*, 11 December 2014, [url](#), p. 16-18

⁷⁹ An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: 24

⁸⁰ Flightrader24, *Airports in Democratic Republic Of The Congo 16 airports*, accessed 08 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹ OSAC, *Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Country Security Report*, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸² The World Bank, *International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Grant in the Amount of SDR 36.9 Million (US\$52 Million Equivalent) to the Democratic Republic of Congo for a Goma Airport Safe Improvement Project*, 25 February 2015, [url](#)

⁸³ DIS, Country of Origin Information Unit has completed the mapping by the use of datawrapper, [url](#)

4.2 Access to housing in Kinshasa

In recent years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a rapid urbanisation. According to Bédécarrats et al, the urban planning and expansion of infrastructure in Kinshasa have long lacked behind the needs of the rapid growing city.⁸⁴ As such, nearly 75% of the DRC's urban population live in slums, which is 15% above the average for the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa.⁸⁵ In a review of the urbanisation of the DRC, the World Bank argued that the political class in the DRC and Kinshasa has failed to address the need for planned urban development for decades in order to absorb the influx of new inhabitants. This lack of planned urban development has allowed private developers to operate in an unregulated manner, which has largely ignored the needs of the poor newcomers; more than 90% of Congolese are believed to live for less than USD 3.10 a day, according to estimates from the World Bank.⁸⁶ According to the Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa (CAHF), the current supply of housing in Kinshasa does not match the rising demand for adequate and affordable housing.⁸⁷ In addition to this, an international humanitarian organisation in the DRC found that Kinshasa has the highest housing costs in the DRC.⁸⁸

Many Congolese have resorted to self-built housing, because of these high housing prices. CAHF estimated that 65% of the population lives in what the Ministry of Planning characterises as inadequate housing. In Kinshasa, 81% of households live in these types of dwellings.⁸⁹ According to CAHF, good quality dwellings in DRC consists of floors, roofs and exterior walls constructed from durable materials.⁹⁰

A large share of the population is barred from accessing adequate housing and thus turns to informal settlements in the outskirts of the city, often located in areas prone to floods and mudslides.⁹¹ In 2015, parts of the Kinshasa's slums were flooded resulting in 31 deaths and more than 20,000 families left homeless.⁹² Furthermore, these slums and informal settlements often lack basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, electricity as well as proper roads connecting the areas with the surrounding city.⁹³ For more, see [Electricity, Water and Sanitation](#).

The international humanitarian organisation in the DRC echoed this and stated that many disadvantaged areas are run by local gangs, who increase the criminality in the city to the point where the police is prevented from entering the areas. The source further assessed that if a person were perceived as an outsider (e.g.

⁸⁴ Bédécarrats et al., "Building commons to cope with chaotic urbanization? Performance and sustainability of decentralized water services in the outskirts of Kinshasa", *Journal of Hydrology*, Volume 573, June 2019, [url](#), p. 1097

⁸⁵ ISS, *Waking the sleeping giant: Development pathways for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 2050*, February 2021, [url](#), p.10

⁸⁶ World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo Urbanization Review: Productive and Inclusive Cities for an Emerging Congo*, 2018, [url](#), pp. 27, 52-53

⁸⁷ CAHF, *2021 Yearbook: Housing Finance in Africa*, 2021, [url](#), p. 94

⁸⁸ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 14

⁸⁹ CAHF, *2021 Yearbook: Housing Finance in Africa*, 2021, [url](#), p. 94

⁹⁰ CAHF, *2021 Yearbook: Housing Finance in Africa*, 2021, [url](#), p. 94

⁹¹ CAHF, *2021 Yearbook: Housing Finance in Africa*, 2021, [url](#), pp. 93-95; World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo Urbanization Review: Productive and Inclusive Cities for an Emerging Congo*, 2018, [url](#), pp. 53-54

⁹² PM News, *31 dead, 20,000 families homeless in torrential rain in Kinshasa*, 10 December 2015, [url](#)

⁹³ World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo Urbanization Review: Productive and Inclusive Cities for an Emerging Congo*, 2018, [url](#), pp. 47

having a surname or ethnic background that is uncommon in Kinshasa) it would increase the probability of failing victim to a crime.⁹⁴ [For more, see Ethnicity.](#)

An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC assessed that it would almost be impossible for people to access housing without a social network and money. In general, the cost of living is high in Kinshasa and it is difficult to make a living in the city for many. Consequently, the source has seen cases where people from Kinshasa have moved to the eastern provinces in search of a better life and better opportunities.⁹⁵

According to the International humanitarian organisation in the DRC, it is almost impossible to access the housing market or gain access to shelter without a network in Kinshasa. Consequently, many single women without a male support network in Kinshasa have to resort to transactional sex in order to gain access to shelter in any way.⁹⁶ This view was shared by Afia Mama, who added that the housing options for women without a male support network moving to Kinshasa from the eastern provinces of DRC is squatting in family houses - a two bedroom house can typically accommodate 15 people. Those without family members in Kinshasa will commonly find shelters or shacks constructed with wood or cartons. The single women who have been subjected to sex trafficking or exploitation will be prone to prostitution. When trying to find housing in Kinshasa or if simply unable to afford rent – such as the sex market, Pakadjuma, where they are provided with cheap accommodation in an unsafe environment.⁹⁷ Women willingly engage in survival sex, a practice of prostitution for disadvantaged people who are in extreme need, which is a common phenomenon amongst women in DRC.⁹⁸

4.3 Orphanages in Kinshasa

There is no newly available data on the number of orphans and other vulnerable children in the DRC.⁹⁹ According to the 2007 Rapid Assessment, Analysis, and Action Planning Report cited by the United States Department of State in 2022, there was an estimated 8.2 million orphans, children with disabilities and other vulnerabilities across the DRC in 2007.¹⁰⁰ Of these, less than 10% received external support and only 3% received medical support.¹⁰¹

According to the Global Orphan Foundation, orphanages in Kinshasa are often located in small compounds with only little space to play and exercise. There is generally a lack of beds for kids in Kinshasa orphanages, and the caregiver to child ratio is often 1 to 50. Furthermore, children are at risk of being undernourished due to extreme food insecurity in the city.¹⁰² UNICEF funds many orphanages in Kinshasa, and as such, they have to meet the minimum requirements in terms of child protection meaning they have to provide food, clothes, psychosocial support and education.¹⁰³

⁹⁴ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 17

⁹⁵ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 16

⁹⁶ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 15; 16

⁹⁷ Afia Mama: 14

⁹⁸ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 11

⁹⁹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ According to NGO Humanium in 2019, the number of children living on the streets in Kinshasa was estimated to be 35,000 - USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022

¹⁰¹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰² Global Orphanage Foundation, *Foster Care vs. Orphanage Care in DRC: The importance of family*, 14 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰³ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 22

An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC consulted for this report stated that there are many orphanages in Kinshasa.¹⁰⁴ According to the source, it has become profitable to run orphanages in a certain manner, as human trafficking scheme has emerged and involve both the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)* and local NGOs in the recent years. Children are brought in from all parts of the DRC to Kinshasa to be placed on the streets for a while before they are relocated to orphanages. After the children are brought to the orphanages, contact is made with the parents and the children are then reunited with their families. This scheme has become a big business since it is financially rewarding to bring the children into the orphanages and then to successfully reunite a so-called orphan with their parents.¹⁰⁵ The source further assessed that these financial incentives have created an industry where it is not rentable to focus on the children in Kinshasa living on the streets since the probability of family reunification is very low. As such, the children living on the streets of Kinshasa are often ignored by the orphanages, as it is not profitable for the orphanages to care for these children.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 20

¹⁰⁵ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 20

¹⁰⁶ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 21

5. Access to public social services

5.1 Education

In accordance with Article 43 of the Constitution (latest amended in 2006), education in primary public school is free and obligatory.¹⁰⁷ In 2007, the government issued a decree limiting school costs for all public school, which only commenced once President Félix Tshisekedi committed to improving access to education by abolishing certain school fees in September 2019.¹⁰⁸ According to a monitoring report from Global Partnership for Education, the main barrier for school enrolment remained economical, as one had to pay registration fees, school materials and uniforms.¹⁰⁹ The latter is a requirement for attending school, and can cost the equivalent of 15-25 USD, which is expensive as the average household in Kinshasa earns 50-90 USD.¹¹⁰

The government has been unable to offer free education consistently in all provinces of DRC,¹¹¹ as the state is mostly involved in education in Kinshasa, where a low percentage of the country's primary school pupils live. Reported in 2018, 4% of pupils lived in Kinshasa while the capital city accounted for a disproportionate 22% of the budget for teachers, whereas 15% of the country's primary pupils are listed in the Kivu provinces, but teachers only received 7% of the teachers' budget.¹¹²

According to USAID, the equality and coverage of the educational system in the DRC is poor and in need of improvement. It was recently estimated that the number of children not attending primary school is 3.5 million and 44% of those that attend, start school late, at the age of six.¹¹³ According to the World Bank, the primary completion rate is only about 67%, and 86% of 10 year olds cannot read and understand simple text.¹¹⁴

The number of pupils spiked after primary schooling became admission free in 2019, but the schools were unable to accommodate all the new pupils.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, there is a lack of schools in and around Kinshasa to meet the demand of pupils; this leaves some children the only option of travelling far and sometimes after dark. This increases the risk of falling victim to crimes, and as noted by the source, there is a risk of encountering similar protection issues as Congolese children in conflict zones.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la République du Congo*, 18 February 2006, [url](#), p. 21, art. 43 "L'enseignement primaire est obligatoire et gratuit dans les établissements publics."

¹⁰⁸ GPE, *Country-Level Prospecting Evaluation. Year 2: Democratic Republic of Congo*, 9 July 2020, [url](#), p. xxiv, p. 68

¹⁰⁹ GPE, *Country-Level Prospecting Evaluation. Year 2: Democratic Republic of Congo*, 9 July 2020, [url](#), p. xxiv, p. 68; Afia Mama: 13

¹¹⁰ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 2

¹¹¹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹² The Washington Post, *The United Nations set an ambitious education goal. Why did it fail in Congo?*, 8 June 2016, [url](#)

¹¹³ USAID, *Democratic Republic of the Congo, Education*, 5 August 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ The World Bank, *The World Bank in DRC*, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 4

¹¹⁶ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 5

5.1.1 Girls' access to education

In 2021, attendance rates for girls at secondary level were lower than boys due to financial, cultural or security reasons, including early marriage and pregnancy for girls.¹¹⁷ When families struggle to pay school fees, boys are often favoured over girls to receive an education.¹¹⁸ It is common practice for girls to experience sexual exploitation, and teachers pressuring girls for sexual favours in return for higher grades.¹¹⁹ According to Afia Mama, the lack of young girls attending school is also a safety issue, because the lack of school infrastructure, safe passages and transport leaves them exposed to sexual harassment. Girls are encouraged to attend school, but parents often withdraw them from school because of safety concerns, as schools are located 5-10 km away, requiring the girls to walk through districts with criminal activities, in which there have been reports of rape. The source further noted that girls in municipalities with households earning a minimum wage, could attend school safely, as these households can afford transport expenses to ensure safe travel to and from school.¹²⁰

According to one NGO, Afia Mama, the Roman Catholic Church in Kinshasa has adopted an unwritten rule that serves as a cultural and religious barrier for pregnant girls to attend school. When young girls engage in premarital sex and fall pregnant, they are not allowed to continue their school, as they are perceived to have a bad influence on other girls at schools.¹²¹

5.2 Employment

5.2.1 Informal economy

Kinshasa has a large adolescent and young population with more than half being under the age of 18. Most of them are out of school and unemployed without immediate economic opportunities.¹²² In 2020, the level of unemployment among the youth population of Kinshasa was 40%.¹²³ Kinshasa has not managed to enter regional and global trade markets nor investments, as it does not produce adequate tradable goods, although internal migration is directed towards Kinshasa for better employment opportunities.¹²⁴ On the contrary, an international humanitarian organisation in DRC has observed cases where people from Kinshasa have moved to the eastern provinces in search of a better life.¹²⁵

According to the International Labour Organisation's database made available via the World Bank, unemployment is indicated at 5.4% of the total labour force as of June 2022. This refers to the share of the

¹¹⁷ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Freedom House, *Democratic Republic of Congo 2021*, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#); An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 7

¹²⁰ Afia Mama: 16

¹²¹ Afia Mama: 17

¹²² The World Bank, *Country Partnership Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo for the Period of FY22-26*, 24 January 2022, [url](#), p. 25

¹²³ The World Bank, *Country Partnership Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo for the Period of FY22-26*, 24 January 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹²⁴ The World Bank Group, *Profiling Living Conditions of the DRC Urban Population, Access to Housing and Services in Kinshasa Province*, November 2021, [url](#), p. 3, 8

¹²⁵ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 17

labour force that is out of work but available and seeking employment.¹²⁶ Besides a higher education, the few jobs in the formal sector in Kinshasa require a well-developed network. In response to this; many develop their own informal ways of generating an income through economic activities.¹²⁷ The typical types of jobs in the informal sector in Kinshasa are taxi driving, selling goods such as fruits and vegetables, as well as working with maintenance and construction.¹²⁸

5.2.2 Women

The overall legal conditions for women to access the labour market have progressed through recent legal reforms and amendments. The current legal framework includes; prohibiting discrimination in employment and guaranteeing equal remuneration (2017); prohibiting gender discrimination in financial services (2017); and allowing women to get a job without their husband's consent (2018).¹²⁹ The Constitution also ensures the protection and promotion of their rights while stating public authorities to be responsible for eliminating all discrimination.¹³⁰ However, the government has not enforced the Constitution nor the recent legislation effectively.¹³¹ Women continue to face discrimination in employment and equal pay due to socio-cultural disparities. Afia Mama stated that women's access to the labour market is challenged. It was previously not allowed for women to be employed without their husband's consent, this has since been amended and no longer applies, however it is yet expected of women to present this kind of consent.¹³²

According to ILO data made available through USDOS, women receive lower pay than men in doing the same job, there is a 77% gap in wage earnings between men and women.¹³³ Furthermore, women face difficulties in occupying positions of authority with high responsibility.¹³⁴ The source from Afia Mama observed companies do not have the interest in disseminating progressive arrangements for women and they subsequently continue with old practices, as women are also unaware of their rights.¹³⁵

In addition to these challenges, women experience a high degree of sexual harassment in the labour market. A large majority is subjected to transactional sex, which is the exchange of monetary compensation for sexual acts. This usually prevents women from taking up employment and accepting promotions even though they fulfil all requirements.¹³⁶

¹²⁶ The World Bank, *Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate) – Congo, Dem. Rep.* June 2022, [url](#) (The unemployment rate is calculated by expressing the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the total number of persons in the labour force)

¹²⁷ Nkuku, Albert Malukisa, Titeca Kristof, *Market Governance in Kinshasa: the competition for information revenue through 'connections'*, February 2018, [url](#), p. 7; An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 9

¹²⁸ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 9

¹²⁹ The World Bank Group, *Women's Economic Empowerment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Obstacles and Opportunities*, 29 June 2021, [url](#), p. 13

¹³⁰ Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la République du Congo*, 18 February 2006, [url](#), p. 13, art. 14: "Les pouvoirs publics veillent à l'élimination de toute forme de discrimination à l'égard de la femme et assurent la protection et la promotion de ses droits."

¹³⁰ Freedom House, *Democratic Republic of Congo 2021*, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

¹³¹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³² Afia Mama: 9

¹³³ The World Bank Group, *Women's Economic Empowerment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Obstacles and Opportunities*, 29 June 2021, [url](#), p. 8

¹³⁴ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Afia Mama: 11

¹³⁶ Afia Mama: 3

Regarding women's access to the labour market, the international humanitarian organisation in the DRC was not aware of any sociocultural obstacles regarding women's ability to work, including in the informal sector. According to the World Bank, Congolese women experience early marriage and high fertility rates, and with only 16.8% completing secondary school (half the rate of completion for men); they are made responsible for household affairs, child and elderly care.¹³⁷ In addition, Afia Mama stated that it is common for employers in the formal sector to require that a female candidate present an authorisation from husband to work.¹³⁸

The majority of women in Kinshasa work in the informal sector with small trade at the markets, in the fields or at the farms. The high illiteracy and poverty rates have resulted in women opening small stalls at the market or in front of their houses. The earnings they make on a day is spent the same day.¹³⁹ According to Afia Mama, a smaller group of academically educated women work in the formal sector and of those, only few receive promotions for higher positions. This has made the informal sector attractive with opportunities of social entrepreneurship and small trade.¹⁴⁰

5.3 Healthcare services

5.3.1 Overall state and expenditure

The Congolese healthcare system is heavily reliant on funding from external donors due to domestic underfunding.¹⁴¹ According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), this lack of domestic funding combined with decades of political instability as well as the collapse of the Congolese economy has resulted in a dysfunctional healthcare system.¹⁴²

5.3.2 Private

The healthcare sector in the DRC consists of a public and a private sector which is divided into a for-profit branch and a non-profit branch operated primarily by NGOs and faith-based organisations.¹⁴³ A review of the healthcare sector in the DRC conducted in 2018 stated that there were 73 public, private and NGO-driven healthcare facilities in Kinshasa.¹⁴⁴

The private for-profit healthcare centres and hospitals operate primarily in urban centres, including Kinshasa. There are no standardised requirements regarding services or facilities, and these can vary considerably. However, private healthcare centres are generally better equipped and are often better funded than their public counterparts.¹⁴⁵ Non-profit healthcare organisations make up a large part of the Congolese healthcare system. Faith-based organisations alone operate approximately 40% of the Congolese health facilities, and

¹³⁷ The World Bank, *The World Bank in DRC*, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Afia Mama: 9

¹³⁹ Afia Mama: 8

¹⁴⁰ Afia Mama: 8

¹⁴¹ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁴² Kalambay, H., and Van Lerberghe, W., *Improving Health System Efficiency: Democratic Republic of Congo – Improving aid coordination in the health sector*, September 2015, [url](#), pp. 7-9

¹⁴³ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁴⁴ Ecole de Santé Publique de Kinshasa, *Evaluation des Prestations des Services de soins de Santé*, April 2019 [url](#), p. 19; EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁴⁵ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 24

they are present throughout the country, including in Kinshasa.¹⁴⁶ NGO-driven healthcare facilities, on the other hand, mainly operate in Kinshasa and the eastern provinces.¹⁴⁷

5.3.3 Public

Public healthcare in the DRC is divided into three categories, primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare.¹⁴⁸ Primary healthcare should provide basic family planning interventions such as condoms and birth control pills, basic HIV/AIDS treatment, basic malaria treatment, a range of basic paediatric services, basic tuberculosis services, nutritional supplementation for pregnant women and a range of childhood vaccinations. These services are meant to be available at local health centres throughout the country.¹⁴⁹ However, according to an EASO report from 2021, health centres often lack the capacity to provide healthcare due to a lack of resources and equipment. This means that diagnosis are often made based on inadequate knowledge. As an example of this, the report cited a medical doctor in the DRC, who stated that a general fever is often assumed to be malaria without further examinations and subsequently treated accordingly.¹⁵⁰

Secondary healthcare in the DRC should offer patients more specialised and complex treatment in hospitals. Secondary healthcare includes treatment against a range of different chronic diseases as well as childhood vaccinations.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, hospitals are supposed to carry out emergency care such as surgery;¹⁵² however, these services are limited due interrupted electric and water supply.¹⁵³ According to a 2015 study, only 2 out of 12 hospital were able to provide essential surgery.¹⁵⁴

The tertiary level of healthcare offers the patients specialised care from specialist physicians at university hospitals and the national hospital, including at the L'hôpital du Cinquantenaire de Kinshasa.¹⁵⁵ According to the Ministry of Health, the hospital does not fulfil this role. All services available in secondary healthcare centres should be available at tertiary care centres as well as emergency services, including emergency surgery.¹⁵⁶

All consultations, diagnostic services and treatments requires the payment of a fee in all types of health facilities. Fees are typically lower in public health facilities relative to private institutions. However, some diseases have been labelled priority diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis), and consultations, diagnostic services and treatments relating to these are in principle exempted from the fee schemes.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ecole de Santé Publique de Kinshasa, *Evaluation des Prestations des Services de soins de Santé*, April 2019 [url](#), p. 11

¹⁴⁷ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁴⁸ Ministère de la Santé, *République Démocratique du Congo, Plan National de Développement Sanitaire recadré pour la période 2019-2022*, November 2018, [url](#), pp. 23-24

¹⁴⁹ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁵⁰ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁵¹ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁵² EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁵³ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁵⁴ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁵⁵ Ministère de la Santé, *République Démocratique du Congo, Plan National de Développement Sanitaire recadré pour la période 2019-2022*, November 2018, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁵⁶ Ministère de la Santé, *République Démocratique du Congo, Plan National de Développement Sanitaire recadré pour la période 2019-2022*, November 2018, [url](#), pp. 86-94

¹⁵⁷ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 21

5.3.5 Healthcare worker situation

The access to updated and reliable data on the healthcare system in the DRC is in general limited, but it is widely acknowledged that the DRC is faced with a critical shortage of healthcare workers.¹⁵⁸ This is true for both doctors, nurses, midwives as well as specialised medical personnel.¹⁵⁹ In 2016, the DRC had the 14th worst healthcare worker to total population ratio in the world.¹⁶⁰ However, the distribution of healthcare workers is uneven throughout the country with Kinshasa having the highest number of doctors in the DRC.¹⁶¹ According to the aforementioned review of the Congolese healthcare system, the training of healthcare workers in the DRC is of poor quality. Moreover, there has been a proliferation of facilities, which do not meet expected standards due to a general lack of resources, equipment and high quality teachers and supervisors. The review further describes a low workforce motivation, in part due to regular non-payment of salaries and low wages.¹⁶²

5.3.2 Access to elderly care

Elderly care and support is extremely limited in the DRC, including in Kinshasa.¹⁶³ In 2021, the first healthcare centre for elders was established in Kinshasa, which can host 40 patients at a time.¹⁶⁴ In the absence of a functional elderly care system, many elderly in the Kinshasa are reliant on the support of family and communal support. Moreover, many elders find healthcare inaccessible and unaffordable. As a result of this, many elderly in the DRC rely on traditional medicines and spiritual prayers as a way of dealing with illness.¹⁶⁵ The International humanitarian organisation in the DRC further elaborated that people employed in the formal sector have their social security insurance at the *caisse social sécurité nationale* (CSSN) paid by their employers. CSSN included retirement care and elderly care. However, the source assessed that the CSSN is very corrupt, and this means that not everybody who is entitled to pensions and elderly care will receive their entitlements. Elderly who have not been employed in the formal sector will have to rely on their family for elderly care.¹⁶⁶

5.4 Electricity

Access to electricity in the DRC is very scarce. The country currently has the third largest population in the world without access to electricity, and it is estimated that 80% of the population will still live without electricity in 2030.¹⁶⁷ However, the electricity infrastructure is generally more developed in the urban areas.¹⁶⁸ The electricity grid in Kinshasa is described as undersized even in the wealthier parts of the city and

¹⁵⁸ ONRHSC, *Observatoire National Des Ressources Humaines de La Santé En RD. Congo*, 2020, [url](#); EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁵⁹ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁶⁰ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁶¹ EASO, *Medical Country of Origin Information Report | Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, August 2021, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁶² Ministère de la Santé, *République Démocratique du Congo, Plan National de Développement Sanitaire recadré pour la période 2019-2022*, November 2018, [url](#), pp. 26-28

¹⁶³ Zihindula, Ganzamungu et. al., "Crying out for assistance", *Health and Care in Old Age in Africa*, 2020, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ RFI, *RDC: l'accès au soin de santé demeure un défi notamment pour les personnes âgées*, 5 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ Zihindula, Ganzamungu et. al., "Crying out for assistance", *Health and Care in Old Age in Africa*, 2020, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: 24

¹⁶⁷ The World Bank, *Increasing access to electricity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Opportunities and challenges*, 2020, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶⁸ The World Bank, *Increasing access to electricity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Opportunities and challenges*, 2020, [url](#), pp. 8, 10; Landinfo, *Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), pp. 17-18

non-existent in other parts.¹⁶⁹ According to a World Bank report from 2020, only 60% of the population has access to electricity, and the service quality and reliability of the electricity is described as very poor. This is mainly due to the saturation of the Kinshasa distribution grid and capacity limitations for two hydroelectric plants. In April 2018 alone, there were reported 3,130 disruptions in the Kinshasa distribution grid resulting in power outages for customers. Two thirds of these power outages were due to load shedding, which happens when the electricity demand exceeds the power supply.¹⁷⁰ These unreliable distributions of electricity in Kinshasa can sometimes result in longer lasting power blackouts. In 2021, this meant that 21 % of those kinois who had access to electricity only had received power four hours a day.¹⁷¹

5.5 Water and sanitation

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has large quantities of freshwater networks with over 50% of Africa's water reserves.¹⁷² Despite these large water reserves, more than 75% of the country's population have no access to safe water.¹⁷³ This is also true for Kinshasa where about 70% of the population has no access to safe water. An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC consulted for this report stated that clean drinking water is generally only accessible in bottles, which can be purchased at market places. However, most kinois cannot afford bottled water, and this forces people to drink water from the local wells.¹⁷⁴ Household drinking water in especially the poorer parts of the city comes mainly from groundwater as well as urban streams, resulting in deficient sanitation and hygienic conditions. As a result of poor levels of sanitation and hygiene, many poor municipalities in Kinshasa experience recurrent outbreaks of diseases, such as gastrointestinal, typhoid, cholera and other diarrheal diseases.¹⁷⁵ In 2017 and 2018, many parts of Kinshasa experienced an outbreak of cholera in part due to consumption of contaminated water.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Landinfo, *Temanotat Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 26; An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: 18

¹⁷⁰ The World Bank, *Increasing access to electricity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Opportunities and challenges*, 2020, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁷¹ ISS, *Waking the sleeping giant: development pathways for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 2050*, February 2021, [url](#), pp. 20-21

¹⁷² Global Waters, *Democratic Republic of Congo*, June 2021, [url](#); UNICEF, *Water, sanitation and hygiene*, n.d., [url](#); Kapembo, M.L., Mukeba, F.B., Sivalingam, P. et al. "Survey of water supply and assessment of groundwater quality in the suburban communes of Selembao and Kimbanseke, Kinshasa in Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Sustain. Water Resour. Manag.* Vol. 8, No. 3, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷³ Kapembo, M.L., Mukeba, F.B., Sivalingam, P. et al. "Survey of water supply and assessment of groundwater quality in the suburban communes of Selembao and Kimbanseke, Kinshasa in Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Sustain. Water Resour. Manag.* Vol. 8, No. 3, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: 18

¹⁷⁵ Kapembo, M.L., Mukeba, F.B., Sivalingam, P. et al. "Survey of water supply and assessment of groundwater quality in the suburban communes of Selembao and Kimbanseke, Kinshasa in Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Sustain. Water Resour. Manag.* Vol. 8, No. 3, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Mbala-Kingebeni, Placide, et al. "Sachet water consumption as a risk factor for cholera in urban settings: Findings from a case control study in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo during the 2017–2018 outbreak.", *PLoS neglected tropical diseases* Vol. 15, No. 7, 2021, [url](#)

According to a 2022 study from Kapembo, Mukeba, Sivalingam, et al., waterborne diseases affected more than 60% of the patients admitted to local hospitals in the less developed and poor parts of Kinshasa between 2013 and 2017.¹⁷⁷

5.6 Food insecurity

According to a report from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) from November 2021, the DRC is experiencing a crisis of food insecurity. The IPC describes Kinshasa as one of the most affected regions in the country, where an estimated 1.6 million inhabitants are affected by the crisis.¹⁷⁸ The causes of this crisis have been described as a combination of many factors and vary from region to region. In Kinshasa, the main causes are economic decline and chronic underdevelopment, high food prices and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁹ Since the publication of the IPC report, the Congolese agricultural sector has been further affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent rise in prices of food staples since the DRC imported 100 % of its wheat products 60-70 % of which was imported from Russia prior to the war. Moreover, DRC also imports 100% of its sunflower seed oil and much of its maize and fertilizer. The price on all three products have soared as a consequence of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Kapembo, M.L., Mukeba, F.B., Sivalingam, P. et al. "Survey of water supply and assessment of groundwater quality in the suburban communes of Selembao and Kimbanseke, Kinshasa in Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Sustain. Water Resour. Manag.* Vol. 8, No. 3, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ IPC, *République Démocratique Du Congo: Analyse De L'insécurité Alimentaire Aiguë Et De La Malnutrition Aiguë De L'ipc*, November 2021, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷⁹ ERCC, *ECHO Daily Flash*, 12 November 2021, [url](#); Mbala-Kingebeni, Placide, et al. "Sachet water consumption as a risk factor for cholera in urban settings: Findings from a case control study in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo during the 2017–2018 outbreak.", *PLoS neglected tropical diseases* Vol. 15, No. 7, 2021, [url](#); IPC, *République Démocratique Du Congo: Analyse De L'insécurité Alimentaire Aiguë Et De La Malnutrition Aiguë De L'ipc*, November 2021, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁸⁰ WFP, *Food Security Implications of the Ukraine Conflict for the Southern Africa Region*, 17 March 2022, [url](#) pp. 2-5; An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 19

6. Women

6.1 Discriminatory laws and practices

The Congolese Constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender, but the law fail to offer women the same social rights as men.¹⁸¹ The Congolese Family Code of 1987 amended in 2016, *Loi 87-010 portant Code de la famille*, contains multiple clauses, which limits a married woman's rights vis-à-vis her husband.¹⁸² Article 444 of the Family Code provides that the husband is the head of the household.¹⁸³ In case the husband assesses that his wife's assets and savings undermines the harmony and pecuniary interests of the household, he can assume the management of said assets and savings.¹⁸⁴ Prior to 2016, the family law further stated that a woman ought to obey her husband, that she had to live with him, and that a woman had to seek her husband's permission before engaging with the legal system.¹⁸⁵ These provisions have since been left out of the legal framework, but they still prevail in the societal idea of what a marriage between a man and a woman constitutes, according to Afia Mama.¹⁸⁶ As such, it is still common for employers to ask a female candidate for her husband's permission to work although this is no longer legal.¹⁸⁷ According to Afia Mama, this attitude towards women in the DRC means that it is difficult for women to seek recourse in the legal framework, because judges often base their decisions on their own cultural beliefs rather than the law when it concerns women's rights.¹⁸⁸

Congolese women are also discriminated against in cases of inheritance. The law provides that sons and daughters have the same rights to inherit land and that surviving spouses, female and male equally have the right to inheritance, but traditional customs continue to discriminate against women and girls regarding inheritance.¹⁸⁹ According to Wagner, Glaesmer et al., the DRC is a patrilineal society, meaning that daughters and wives are perceived as temporary members of the family, while sons and husbands are regarded as those carrying on the family line.¹⁹⁰ As such, traditional customs often prescribes that the husband's family should take all off the household's assets, often leaving the widow and girls with nothing.¹⁹¹ According to an anonymous source quoted in a Landinfo report from 2015, the general attitude towards women in DRC is 'surprisingly negative' in comparison to other African countries.¹⁹²

¹⁸¹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸² Equality Now, *DR Congo – Law 87-010 On The Family Code*, 6 November 2021, [url](#); OECD, *Gender Index – The Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2019, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁸³ Equality Now, *DR Congo – Law 87-010 On The Family Code*, 6 November 2021, [url](#); OECD, *Gender Index – The Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2019, [url](#), p. 2; République Démocratique du Congo, *Loi 87-010 portant Code de la famille*, 1987, amended 2016, article 444, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁸⁴ République Démocratique du Congo, *Loi 87-010 portant Code de la famille*, 1987, amended 2016, article 490, [url](#), p. 29

¹⁸⁵ République Démocratique du Congo, *Loi 87-010 portant Code de la famille*, 1987, articles 444, 450, 454, [url](#), pp. 69-71

¹⁸⁶ Afia Mama: 5; 9; 10

¹⁸⁷ Afia Mama: 9

¹⁸⁸ Afia Mama: 10

¹⁸⁹ OECD, *Gender Index – The Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2019, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁹⁰ Wagner, K., Glaesmer, H., Bartels, S.A. et al., "Presence of the Absent Father: Perceptions of Family among Peacekeeper-Fathered Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo". *J Child Fam Stud*, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹² Landinfo, *Temanotat: Den demokratiske republikken Kongo: Intern migrasjon*, 19 February 2015, [url](#), p. 20

6.2 Single women without a male support network

The Swiss State Secretariat for Migration defines a single woman in a Kinshasa context as an adult woman with or without children, who support herself without a male partner.¹⁹³ As stated above, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a patrilineal society, which means that the generations are connected through the father of a family.¹⁹⁴ In a Congolese context, this further means that a woman in the DRC is always only something in relation to a male relative. As such, women who break with this traditional way of imagining the family are perceived negatively by society and by their own family at times.¹⁹⁵

Single women in Kinshasa often find themselves in a more vulnerable position, for this reason many women from female-headed household pretend to be married in an effort to avoid stigmatisation and decrease their vulnerability.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, Afia Mama assessed that single and educated women in Kinshasa would be more emancipated than many married women in the DRC, because they are more aware of their rights than uneducated women.¹⁹⁷ The source added that single women are often assumed to be prostitutes in Kinshasa and sexual transaction is therefore expected of them. As single women are in a more vulnerable position, they are subject to informal taxation by the police or other inspectors for accessing the local marketplace.¹⁹⁸ Widows and women-lead households are presented with less opportunities, as they are generally more vulnerable and report higher occurrence of poverty and extreme poverty, because they are unable to inherit their late husband's property and assets.¹⁹⁹

There has recently been different scandals involving sexual exploitation, which has included prominent politicians and health workers who were involved in the Ebola response.²⁰⁰ This statement is supported by McLean and Modi, who further elaborated that single women without a network in Kinshasa often resort to transactional sex as a means to access shelter as well as earning an income. Engaging in sex work or transactional sex often further stigmatises the women.²⁰¹

For more on single women's access to shelter in Kinshasa, see [Access to housing in Kinshasa](#)

¹⁹³ Swiss State Secretariat (SEM), *Focus RD Congo; Situation des femmes seules à Kinshasa*, 15 January 2016, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁹⁴ Wagner, K., Glaesmer, H., Bartels, S.A. et al., "Presence of the Absent Father: Perceptions of Family among Peacekeeper-Fathered Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo". *J Child Fam Stud*, 2022, [url](#);

¹⁹⁵ De Herdt, Tom "Hidden families, single mothers and Cibabalaba: Economic Regress and Changing Household Composition in Kinshasa", *Trefon, T. (Red.), Reinventing order in the Congo – How people respond to state failure in Kinshasa*. London: Zed Books, 2004 pp. 121, 128

¹⁹⁶ Jacobs C. et al., *Figurations of Displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Empirical findings and reflections on protracted displacement and translocal connections on Congolese IDPs*, November 2020, [url](#), p. 29

¹⁹⁷ Afia Mama: 11; 12

¹⁹⁸ Afia Mama: 12

¹⁹⁹ The World Bank, *Democratic Republic of Congo Systematic Country Diagnostic, Policy Priorities for Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in a Post-Conflict Country and Fragile State*, March 2018, [url](#), p. 1

²⁰⁰ An international humanitarian organisation in the DRC: 11

²⁰¹ McLean Hilker, L., Modi, A. T., "'Empowerment' of adolescent girls and young women in Kinshasa: research about girls, by girls", *Gender and Development*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2016, [url](#), pp. 478

6.3 Sexual and gender based violence

The preamble of the Constitution references the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and commitment to conventions related to the protection and rights of women.²⁰² Article 14-15 require the public authorities to combat all forms of violence against women in their public and private lives, including sexual violence.²⁰³ This is reiterated in the law on sexual violence, which criminalizes all forms of rape, sexual assaults, sexual harassment, forced marriage and sexual mutilation among other acts.²⁰⁴

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted in 2017 that violence against women is due to discriminatory attitudes towards women, traditional customs, weak legal and judicial systems, and impunity of perpetrators, all of which contributes to an overall low gender equality and widespread sexual and gender based violence.²⁰⁵

According to USDOS, women have been targeted based on assumptions of witchcraft and are often killed or burned as a result of those accusations. An NGO documented this harmful practice and recorded 324 accusations of witchcraft from June to September 2021; another NGO reported 37 women killed by mobs in Kivu, Ituri and Kinshasa.²⁰⁶

The DRC does not provide penalties for domestic violence, even though such violence could be considered an assault and a crime in accordance with the existing laws. The police has little incentive to intervene, as they perceive domestic violence a domestic dispute.²⁰⁷ According to an USDOS report published in 2017, spousal abuse is generally socially acceptable.²⁰⁸ Afia Mama observed women referred to family members for support. The source noted an example of a woman who had sought protection at a police station for domestic abuse; she was referred to her family members, who shamed her into returning to her husband. She was found dead the day after her return.²⁰⁹ Recent statistics indicates 37% of women to have experienced partner violence, but are rarely open about the incident due to fear of rejection in their marriage and community.²¹⁰

The social system for children and women's protection is scarce and state protection is limited. Afia Mama inquired the provincial governor in Kinshasa on the number of social workers in the province; the governor responded the capacity was 20 social workers.²¹¹ Additionally, there is a lack of capacity in infrastructure in

²⁰² Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la République du Congo*, 18 February 2006, [url](#), p. 9

²⁰³ Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, *Constitution de la République du Congo*, 18 February 2006, [url](#), p. 14, art. 14-15

²⁰⁴ USDOS (U.S. Department of State), *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ OECD, *Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019, Country Profile: Democratic Republic of Congo*, December 2018, [url](#), p. 3-4; UNAIDS, *Coalition working to end gender-based sexual violence in Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 9 March 2021, [url](#); EASO, *Sexual and gender-based violence (SBGV), including: conflict related sexual violence, sexual and domestic violence, trafficking, traditional harmful practices*, July 10 2019, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April, 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ OECD, *Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019, Country Profile: Democratic Republic of Congo*, December 2018, [url](#), p. 4

²⁰⁹ Afia Mama: 20

²¹⁰ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

²¹¹ Afia Mama: 20

terms of shelters or emergency houses for victims of sexual and gender based violence. Currently, there are approximately five Mother and Baby Houses with the capacity to accommodate 20 victims in Kinshasa.²¹²

²¹² Afia Mama 20

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Annex 1: Terms of Reference (ToR), July 2022

1. Networks in DRC and Kinshasa
 - a. Kinship, ethnicity and religion
 - b. Cultural and linguistic variations
 - c. Political and social affiliations
2. General security situation in Kinshasa
 - a. Development of the general security situation in Kinshasa
3. Access to Kinshasa
 - a. Freedom of movement
 - b. Housing
 - c. Orphanages
4. General access to public services
 - a. Education
 - b. Employment
 - c. Healthcare
 - d. Food, Water and Electricity
5. Women
 - a. Discriminatory laws and practices
 - b. Violence against women
 - c. Sexual abuse
 - d. Lone women without male support network

Annex 2: Interview notes

An international humanitarian organisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Skype-interview, 29 July 2022

Access to information

1. The source has been working in the DRC since 2018, but has been present in DRC previously. She has mostly worked out of the Eastern provinces in the DRC, but through her work, the source has established contact with representatives of civil society as well as community leaders throughout the country, including in Kinshasa. The source stated that it is fundamental to the work of her organisation to know a lot about the context in which they operate. As such, the organisation is in constant dialogue with representatives of different parts of society such as politicians, members of local organisations, the aforementioned representatives of civil society as well as community leaders.

Access to education

2. The source advised that there are both a public and a private educational system in Kinshasa. The private schools are very expensive and out of reach for the overwhelming majority of the citizens in Kinshasa. The fees for attending private schools in Kinshasa varies a lot and ranges from 200 USD a month and up to several thousand USD a month. The average earnings of the people in Kinshasa ranges between 50 USD and 90 USD a month, and most *kinois* live on less than one USD a day.
3. The public schools are in principle free. In reality however, parents need to pay the teachers in order for the teachers to receive a salary. Moreover, every student needs a school uniform in order to attend school. These school uniforms costs between 15 to 25 USD, and so this is very expensive for most people in Kinshasa since most households have many children. The organisation that the source represents operates out of the assumption that every household has an average of five children. These expenses mean that the poor in Kinshasa cannot afford to send their children to school. The source further explained that since Kinshasa is not a war zone, the educational system in the city receives little financial funding compared to the Eastern provinces through humanitarian funds. This financial support could in theory help parents to be able to afford school uniform and pay the teachers' salary, but such financial support is very limit in Kinshasa. This is because most of the funding is directed to humanitarian work rather than development work. The source had no information regarding how many children are not able to attend school because of financial obstacles.
4. When primary school became free in 2019, there was a spike in the number of students who attended schools, and the schools could not accommodate all these new students. However, not long after the free primary school initiative, the parents realised that they still had to pay many fees and this meant that some parents had to withdraw their children from school again.
5. According to the source, there are not enough schools in and around Kinshasa to meet the demand. Therefore, some children have to travel far to get to school and this increases the risk of the children falling victim to a crime such as rape and even kidnapping since they have to travel far and sometimes after dark. This means that these children face the same type of protection issues as Congolese children in conflict zones.
6. When asked whether there are any cultural or ethnic barriers to the educational system in Kinshasa, the source stated that anyone perceived as being associated with Rwanda would face harsh

discrimination – not just within the educational system – but in all parts of society. Moreover, the sources stressed that this discrimination against *Rwandaphone* people happens all across the DRC. As such, any person belonging to any of the Banya ethnic groups (Banyamulenge, Banyarwanda, Banyambisha) as well as Hutus and Tutsis are at risk of being discriminated against and harassed. The source has even heard of people not belonging to of these ethnic groups being attacked because the attackers thought the victims merely looked like Tutsis. The source explained that there has been tensions between *Rwandaphone* people and other ethnic groups in the DRC since colonial times, but since 2020, there has been a dramatic increase in hate speech against people associated with Rwanda on social media and elsewhere due to the increasing tensions between the two countries. This increase in hate speech has resulted in an increase in attacks on *Rwandaphone* people in the DRC, including in Kinshasa.

7. Regarding girls' access to the educational system, the source stated that if and when parents has to choose who of their children gets to go to school, it will almost always be the boys who gets to go rather than the girls. Moreover, girls in Congolese schools are more likely to be subject to physical or sexual abuse.

Employment

8. The source stated that there are very few jobs in the formal sector in Kinshasa. In order to get a job in the formal sector in Kinshasa, one not only needs the right educational background, but they also need a well-developed network of people already inside the informal sector. In practice, this means that unless one has a cousin or a brother within the formal sector, it is very difficult to get a job in Kinshasa if that person arrives from another town or city in the DRC.
9. As a result of this, most people in Kinshasa have to turn to the informal sector to earn a living. People who work in the informal sector live with great uncertainty because they do not have a stable source of income. The source stated that in order for newcomers to Kinshasa to establish an income through the informal sector, they also need to draw on their network to some extent. The source advised that it would be very challenging to establish oneself in the informal sector in Kinshasa without a network in the city. Typical jobs in the informal sector in Kinshasa would be driving a moto taxi, selling fruit and vegetables as well as working with maintenance and construction.
10. According to the source, life in Kinshasa is in many ways more challenging than life elsewhere in the DRC, including in the Eastern provinces. Although Kinshasa is not an active conflict zone, there are many challenges to life in the city. Several reports show numerous problems of protection and violation of human rights. It is heavily polluted and access to clean water and sanitation is very scarce. This means that there are many waterborne diseases in the city such as typhus and in some parts of the city, cholera has become endemic due to the poor level of hygiene and sanitation. Furthermore, all fruits and vegetables have to be flown in from other parts of the DRC, which results in the cost of living being many times higher in Kinshasa than many other parts of the country. As an example of this, the source stated that a regular cheese that costs around 3 USD in Goma can cost up to 15 USD in Kinshasa.
11. The source stated that she was not aware of any sociocultural obstacles regarding women's ability to work, including in the informal sector. However, the source stressed that women in the DRC are at risk of being sexually exploited when they try to make a living. So-called survival sex is a widespread phenomenon amongst women in the DRC. Recently, there have been different scandals involving sexual exploitation, which have included prominent politicians and healthcare workers involved in the Ebola response.

Child labour

12. Child labour is prevalent throughout the DRC, but the source assessed that it is more prevalent in Kinshasa than in other parts of the country because life in general is more difficult in Kinshasa compared to elsewhere in the DRC. Typical types of jobs include working in fields outside the city, selling good in the street and some also engage in prostitution in order to earn a living. Children are also employed in the transportation sector, because it is cheaper to employ children compared to adults. Children recruited for child labour can be as young as five or six years old. The source was not aware of children being employed by the Congolese government.
13. The source explained that it is a common practice for a family to send their child to another family where the child works with domestic duties in return for education. This practice has been compared to modern day slavery, according to the source.

Access to housing

14. Newcomers to Kinshasa will have to rent a room. However, this can be very costly as Kinshasa has the highest housing costs in the DRC. Consequently, the source stated that some employees of her organisation posted in Kinshasa generally earn more than employees posted elsewhere because it is so costly to rent a room the city or access the housing market in any other way.
15. The source stated that it is commonplace for women in Kinshasa to be sexually exploited in return for shelter if they do not have any other means of accessing the housing market. This is especially common practice for single women without a male support network. In these cases, sex is often used as a currency if the women has no money to pay rent.
16. The source assessed that it would be almost impossible for people to access housing network without a network nor money. In general, the cost of living is so high in Kinshasa and it is very difficult to make a living in the city for many. Consequently, the source has seen cases where people from Kinshasa have moved to the Eastern provinces in search of a better life.
17. Many of the areas and neighbourhoods in Kinshasa where the less well-off citizens live are run by local gangs of often young men who drive up the criminality in the city and sometimes prevent the state from entering these areas. The sources assessed that if a person is perceived as an outsider (e.g. having a surname, ethnic background etc. that is uncommon in Kinshasa) this would likely increase the probability of falling victim to a crime.

Electricity, water, sanitation and food insecurity

18. Very few neighbourhoods in Kinshasa – and only the wealthy ones – have access to reliable electricity. The same is true for access to clean water and sanitation. In many neighbourhoods, households have to share the sanitation facilities. Clean water is not accessible apart from bottled water at the market places. This can force people to drink the water from wells if they cannot afford bottled water. There is no control of the flow of water nor the wells in the city, and it is often heavily polluted and can lead to diseases such as typhoid, cholera and diarrhea. The water and sanitation standards are generally poorer in Kinshasa, since most of Kinshasa is slum and informal settlements.
19. Food insecurity is widespread in Kinshasa and most areas of the city are either at IPC three (crisis) or four (emergency). On top of the already severe situation concerning food insecurity in the DRC, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has contributed to rising prices on food staples such as wheat and oil and well as gas prices across the DRC.

Orphanages

20. There are many orphanages across Kinshasa. This is because, it has become lucrative to run orphanages in a certain manner. In recent years, a human trafficking scheme has emerged that involves both the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and local NGOs. Children are brought from all parts of the DRC to Kinshasa where they are put on the street for a while before they are collected as orphans and placed in orphanages. The parents are often promised that their children will be given an education or job in Kinshasa and they are therefore willingly sending their children to Kinshasa. In the streets, the boys will usually engage in petty crimes such as theft to survive, while the girls are often sexually exploited. After the children are brought to the orphanages, contact is made with the parents and the children is subsequently reunited with their families. This scheme has become big business since it is financially rewarded both to bring the children into the orphanages and to successfully reunite a so-called orphan with their parents.
21. These financial incentives have created an industry where it often not rentable to focus on the children in Kinshasa living on the streets since the probability of family reunification is very low. As such, the actual orphanages living on the streets of Kinshasa are often ignored by the orphanages as it is not profitable for the orphanages to care for these children.
22. According to the source, there are some regulations imposed on orphanages. Because many orphanages are funded by UNICEF, they have to meet the minimum requirements in terms of child protection meaning that they have to provide food, clothes, psycho-social support and education.

Elderly care

23. People employed in the formal sector have their social security insurance at the *caisse social sécurité nationale* (CSSN) paid by their employers. CSSN included retirement care and elderly care. However, the CSSN is very corrupt, and this means that not everybody who is entitled to pensions and elderly care will receive their entitlement. Elderly who have not been employed in the formal sector will have to rely on their family for elderly care.

Freedom of movement

24. The road networks across the DRC are very poor and underdeveloped. This means that in reality, travelling by plane is the only realistic option if one wants to travel from the Eastern provinces to Kinshasa, and the plane tickets for commercial flights are so expensive that the overwhelming majority of the Congolese cannot afford this means of travel. Even if the roads were well developed, the risk of falling victim to a crime would be so high that this would prevent many from embarking on the journey from the Eastern provinces to Kinshasa.

Afia Mama, an NGO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Skype-interview, 2 August 2022

Access to information

1. The source is the Director of Afia Mama (women's health in Swahili), which was established in 2012 to promote and protect women's rights in DRC and ensure women's access to public services, justice, education, safe water and sexual and reproductive health. The organization works in all 26 provinces in DRC with its headquarters in Kinshasa.
2. The organisation collaborates with representatives from different institutions and groups operating in DRC to assess women's needs and advocate for their rights. The organisation works closely with public institutions to ensure better services such as health, education and justice, and international NGOs and foundations for financial and technical support, while being in close contact with local women associations from churches, marketplaces and other places they might search for services, as well as traditional and religious leaders.

Access to employment

3. The legal framework to ensure women's access to employment has progressed a lot. However, it has not been implemented, meaning public and private sectors do not take the necessary measures to ensure a safe environment for women to access labour.
4. Women face different challenges in accessing the labour market. The majority of women lack the capacity and skills to access labour opportunities on technological platforms due to illiteracy and thus they are challenged on the internet. According to the source, another challenge for women to access the labour market is sexual harassment. The majority of women are subjected to transactional sex – which prevents them from taking up a job, or getting a promotion even when they fulfil the requirements and skills needed.
5. The attitude towards women is that they do not have the capacity for challenging labour, meaning they have to prove their capacity 4 times more than their male counterparts. Another observation is the discriminatory approach toward social benefit of workers between men and women. The old labour law dictated that social benefits not be applied to women, since women were included as part of their husbands social benefits.
6. The source stated there is an issue of impunity, which makes it difficult for organisations, such as Afia Mama, to advocate for a zero tolerance policy towards gender based violence.
7. There is a disparity in salaries between men and women, and while the legal framework does not allow for this, the pay of salaries is decided by the company rather than the law. However this does not apply to jobs in Parliament, but then there will be a disparity in the social benefits.
8. In Kinshasa, the majority of women work in the informal sector, working at the market, in the fields of small farms and in small trade. The illiteracy and poverty rates in Kinshasa are high and for that reason many decide to sell products either at the market or in front of their house. There are few women in the formal sector and in the public institutions, and of those; few are promoted, why they opt for informal occupation in social entrepreneurship and small trade. Even academic skilled women are choosing informal occupation such as sewing clothes or working as a hairdresser to have an income. The source noted that their earnings are day to day, the amount they earn for one day is spent on food for that same day. Other women work for the humanitarian organisations, however they are depended on the grants provided to organisations.

9. The source stated that cultural challenges for women's access to the labour market is evident by the practice of marital authorisation. Companies were previously not allowed to hire women without their husband's authorisation, this practice has since been banned, but still exists informally. The source stated that it is expected of women to present this authorisation despite it not being legally required. Women also experience social pressure from religious leaders to be a good submissive Christian wife. Source noted that women that sought support from Afia Mama were labelled bad women.
10. There are labour tribunals and labour inspectors to ensure work places are safe for everyone and women, but the problem lies not with the institutional framework but rather the individuals hired for these positions to reinforce the law. According to the source, individual beliefs can override decision-making that should be based on the applicable laws. It was stated that also judges act non-impartial and impose cultural beliefs to decisions rather than the law.
11. The source has observed that companies have no interest in disseminating progressive dispositions for women and continue their ways based on old practices, and when women are not aware of their rights, there is no risk of conflict or even lawsuits submitted by women. In addition, the government does not prioritise the issue of women due to the conflict in the Eastern part of country, it is therefore NGOs such as Afia Mama and others that disseminate the law to a greater extent by reminding companies their obligations to ensure women their rights.
12. According to the source, single and educated women are more emancipated than married women in Congolese communities. There is however, prejudice towards single women as being prostitutes in Kinshasa and sexual transaction is therefore expected of them, but they have easier access to the labour market while also being subjected to sexual harassment. Single women experience informal taxation due to impunity and their vulnerable position. The police or other inspector will require an informal tax in addition to the fees they must pay for selling at a marketplace, only few of them will seek support from NGOs for this injustice.

Single women without a male support network

13. Women without a male support network are by law not at disadvantage, but in practice women do not have the economic capacity to access housing, education or healthcare and the state does not offer much help. A woman without an academic education has difficulties finding housing as the informal renting system a safeguard rent payment of 10 months', but the law only allows 3 months. Other public services such as healthcare and education are being privatised and thus require economic capacity. Only primary education is free, but there are other expenses such as school materials and uniforms. Single women also have additional challenges in sexual and reproductive health and HIV, as they are stigmatised. Women can be rejected when reporting a case to law enforcement as they are perceived as being a bad women accusing their husbands. This is an example of how cultural and religious beliefs can weigh more than the law in practice. Recently, a special unit within the police force for women and children protection was established.
14. The housing options for women without a male support network moving to Kinshasa from the Eastern provinces of DRC is squatting in family houses, typically a two bedroom house is accommodation for up to 15 people. Those without family members in Kinshasa will commonly find shelters or shacks constructed with wood or cartons. The single women who have been subjected to sex trafficking or exploitation will be prone to prostitution when trying to find housing in Kinshasa or if simply unable to afford rent – such as the sex market, *pakadjuma*, where they are provided with cheap accommodation in an unsafe environment.

Access to education

15. The lack of young girls attending school is not a cultural barrier but a safety issue. The source noted that school infrastructure lacks safe passages and safe transport for girls to attend school leading to cases of sexual harassment.
16. The number of schools is insufficient to the population growth in Kinshasa. Girls are encouraged to attend school, but the road to school is usually 5-10 km in districts with criminal activities and with reports of rape parents decide to have their girls at home or at the market working alongside their mothers. The source observed that in municipalities with households earning a minimum age girls are more enabled to attend school as these households can afford transport expenses to ensure safe travel to and from school. It is therefore a security and poverty issue for girls to attend school, the source noted this applies to 20 out of the 24 municipalities in Kinshasa.
17. Young pregnant girls are in practice not allowed to continue their schooling in Kinshasa although not dictated by law but by cultural and religious beliefs. The Roman Catholic Church and other Christian religious communities support many schools in Kinshasa, and they decide that pregnant girls who engaged in premarital sex are bad influence on other girls in school. It has thus become an unwritten law.

Gender-based violence and sexual violence

18. Since 2020, the rate of domestic violence, including physical and verbal assaults, has become very high due to the COVID-19 confinement. Another aspect of domestic violence is economic violence, meaning women in small trade businesses cannot control their own economic gain.
19. The prevalence of child and forced marriage is high. Pregnancy is a factor that leads to child or forced marriage because a young pregnant woman will be forced to marry. The sexual consent age is 18 years, and those under are in fact viewed as victims of rape, but the moral and cultural beliefs allow child and forced marriage. The young pregnant girls are predominantly a result of rape taking place in the poorest municipalities in Kinshasa. According to the source, rape has been reported to happen within the police and military bases in the city as well.
20. Afia Mama followed up with the provincial governor in Kinshasa requesting the exact number of social workers in the province, the answer was 20. The state has established a minimum social system for children's protection, and they are not supervised, as they should. State protection mechanisms are limited, there is a lack in the infrastructure, meaning no shelters or emergency houses for victims of GBV in Kinshasa. Women are usually referred to family members for support. There is four of five Mother and Baby Houses with the capacity of 20 women in Kinshasa, which is insufficient for the number of victims. The source noted an example of a woman seeking protection at a police station for domestic abuse, they took her back to the house where family members shamed her into going back to her husband as a good wife, upon her return the next day she died. NGOs are working on establishing safe houses depending on their funding. It is a part of the national strategy to fight gender-based violence, have safe places with a health centre and police station in close proximity, but there is no budget.

José Bazonzi, The University of Kinshasa, UNIKIN

Zoom-interview, 8 August 2022

Professor José M. Bazonzi is a full Professor of sociology at the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN) and heads the GREC - Groupe de recherche et d'études stratégiques sur le Congo. His field of research is the Sociology of Migration, Urban Governance and Conflicts. He is currently coordinating a research project on displaced populations entitled "Protracted Displacement Economies" - PDE

(<https://www.displacementeconomies.org/>), notably in Kinshasa, North and South Kivu, in partnership with the University of Sussex (UK). He has participated in several national and international research programmes. His expertise also extends to political and cultural sociology, and for several years Prof. Bazonzi has conducted qualitative research on mobility, displacement, and conflict in the DRC.

Your research area and access to information

Question: *How do you access information and from which sources in relation to daily life in Kinshasa?*

1. Based in the city of Kinshasa, Prof. Bazonzi is a member of an international research team currently working on protracted displacement populations in five countries around the world. The DRC component of this project takes into account protracted displacement caused by armed conflict in the east of the country as well as natural disasters. One of the research sites for this project is Kinshasa. Accompanied by his GREC-Unikin team, Prof. Bazonzi conducted several field research activities (focus groups, workshops, interviews, surveys, ...), with a multitude of interlocutors, including, but not limited to, displaced populations in Kinshasa and the Kivus (<https://www.displacementeconomies.org/mana-pfasha-the-incredible-resilience-of-rwandan-refugees-in-masisi-drc/>), the Red Cross, local associations active in humanitarian assistance and the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), community leaders, etc.

Overview of social networks in Kinshasa

Question: *To what extent does the idea of social networks and social obligations towards family/kin/ethnicity play a role for the individual in Kinshasa?*

2. The Professor answered the question by giving a sociological background: Kinshasa being located in the west of the country, it is predominantly populated by people from the western and northern regions of the country, although the capital of the country receives people from all over the country, including from the distant eastern and south-eastern regions. However, these populations mainly speak Lingala in the capital. Social networks depend on this: it is easier for a person from the west to integrate because they can more easily find their way around when faced with problems of precariousness. Prof. Bazonzi pointed out that it is a bit more difficult for people from the eastern regions to integrate because they do not have much family there, and if they have difficulty expressing themselves, initially in Lingala.
3. The important social networks are above all those of the family, as there is a certain family solidarity when the reciprocal links are well established and well maintained. This solidarity is only activated if these ties are maintained; the family can also deny help and cut the ties if it decides to do so, and especially in reaction to the fact that the migrant has not been able to maintain good relations with his or her family back home. In addition to the family, another key actor is the church as a social

network, which plays a very important role in integration. On the other hand, the role of the clans has become less and less important due to modernisation.

Question: To what extent can an individual in Kinshasa expect to receive assistance from his/her social network(s) in Kinshasa?

4. With a minimum of "communitarianism", such a person can receive a minimum of help. It should be mentioned, however, that this person should have a minimum of advance connection with the communities on the spot. This means that if one arrives in Kinshasa and finds families from one's own ethnic group, it will be easier to integrate. But this requires the community to be 'resource heavy' and the person to have a maximum of reliable connections. There also needs to be a certain reciprocity between the person who comes to settle in the capital and the family on the spot, because the person who arrives from the East comes a priori as a 'foreigner', especially if he or she does not speak Lingala, the local language, or even French, the official language.
5. At the community level, there is also another type of solidarity, namely the 'mutuelles' (English equivalent term; 'mutuals'). In the capital, these mutuals play a role especially for people who come from far away and are in need, because these people feel more fragile than others in Kinshasa. For example, a mutual society founded in Kinshasa was able to help displaced young people from Kasai, following the Kamwina Nsapu conflict, because the members contributed money and the mutual society was able to buy motorbikes to help young people in the city. Through the mutuals, members of the community of origin can mobilise to come to the aid of a member who lives in town and has resource problems and is in danger of dying. In fact, these mutuals are a kind of cultural association, but they play an important role in providing social assistance to members; they operate on the basis of regular or even occasional contributions from members, but they rely mainly on the generosity of 'dignified' members, i.e. politicians, businessmen, etc., who also rely on these associations in return, during elections. When one is a newcomer to the city (the milieu), one is automatically entitled to become a member, being one of the 'family', a member of the community; the old receive the new. There is a variety of support available to the member: from informal financial support to employment or job placement support; it all depends on the aura of the member, his or her helpfulness and the richness and network of the community to which the association belongs.

Question: What is the situation for people in Kinshasa without a social network?

6. A person without a social network in Kinshasa will have serious difficulties in adapting and integrating, because without the family and without connections to the Church, the person will be a bit like being abandoned because in the DRC, the social assistance provided by the state does not function properly. There is almost a vacuum here, and this is also true for people who come from far away to settle in the capital, as well as for the people there. The social welfare services exist but they are not up to the task. Such a person first faces the problems of housing, then of work and afterwards the problem of resources. In addition, the person will have problems with food and access to health care in case of illness. In the DRC, the family and the church constitute or practically play the role of informal social security. Perhaps we should also mention here the roots of youth unemployment and urban banditry (gangs) and crime, known in Kinshasa as "Kuluna": many young people, without jobs, often under the influence of drugs, engage in reprehensible acts ... Thus, the risk is very high for a

person without support, to venture into Kinshasa, at the risk of tipping over into this urban banditry, or simply into misery.

Ethnicity in Kinshasa

Question: To what extent does newcomers to Kinshasa from the Eastern provinces risk discrimination/persecution on the basis of their ethnic/regional background?

7. There are no eastern communities in Kinshasa that would be frowned upon because of their regional origin. The Congo is a mosaic of nearly 450 ethnicities (as evidenced by the archives of the Royal Museum of Tervuren), and all Congolese communities are welcome in Kinshasa, the capital: this is the pride and strength of the country. There are joking relationships between different populations in Congo (DRC); this is not discrimination but institutionalised jokes. For example, the Ne Kongo are 'uncles' of the Luba; the Tetela are 'uncles' of the Mongo, etc.
8. However, it is important to stress here that there is a problem with the so-called 'Banyamulenge', populations of Rwandan origin. It should be noted that this term arose in 1996, during the war against the regime of Marshal Mobutu, and it does not designate a Congolese ethnic group as such, nor is it part of the Congolese cultural heritage - Mulenge being the name of the hill that hosted these Rwandan refugees, not far from Uvira, in South Kivu. Rwandan-speaking populations arrived in the DRC in several waves after Congo's independence in 1960, due to frequent armed conflicts and famines in neighbouring Rwanda. However, several small groups arrived before the 1960s, under the guidance of Belgian settlers to work in the fields and mines of Congo, and they settled and became Congolese in 1960: this type of migration was called MIB ('mission d'immigration Banyarwanda'). On the other hand, and this is the origin of the great confusion that reigns to this day, other groups that arrived after 1960, and have become more numerous than the first group before 1960, and whose members are Rwandan refugees and do not have Congolese nationality, are still stirring up the fibre of exclusion. It is the members of these groups who claim to be victims of discrimination. And yet, on closer inspection, it seems that these groups simply have problems of integration and face real problems of adaptation. This is a complex issue and the difficult integration of these Rwandophone populations has always been a "soft underbelly" for the country. Just think! The Congo has 9 neighbours, and hosts nearly 5 million internally displaced people and more than 500,000 refugees from neighbouring countries (Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, Congo Brazzaville, ...), which is equivalent to nearly 20% of the global burden (UNHCR, 2021). Congo has no problem with Angolan, Central African, Congolese Brazzaville, Ugandan, South Sudanese, Burundian refugees, etc. It is curious to note that it is only these Rwandan refugees who are 'self-victimising', and we know the negative role they play in the armed groups that are active in the east of the DRC - some work does exist related to this issue of integration according to Emile Durkheim...
9. Among other refugee groups from neighbouring countries, none of them mention discrimination, why only them? Why can't they integrate like the others, in the 450 ethnic groups of Congo? The Congo is a country of legendary hospitality since its ancestors, since Marshal Mobutu, and this trait of our culture will not fade away any time soon. One sometimes hears in the international media an argument according to which these Rwandophone populations would be a minority ... Here again, it is only bluff and instrumentalisation. I repeat, in Congo, we have 450 ethnic groups: do you know the Mfununga, the Binsa, the Lemfu, the Mboma, the Hungana, the Salampansu, the Akula, the Ndunga,

the Luwara, the Pero, etc.? All these populations are the real minorities of this vast country in the heart of Africa! And after all, Kinshasa being the capital, its inhabitants cannot gloat over populations welcomed as refugees and who contribute to the destabilisation of their country. But, in reality, this is neither racial stigmatisation nor cultural discrimination. It is rather the crucial question of the integration of these populations into the great Congolese mosaic. I wrote an article on this issue in 2019:

(<https://migconf2018.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/josecc81-mvuezolo-bazonzi-abstract.pdf>).

Question: If this is the case, how are people from the Eastern provinces in Kinshasa identified as such?

- 10.** People from the East are easily identifiable by their use of the Swahili language, at least for those who do not know Lingala. Therefore, they are not discriminated against at all. However, the Rwandan-speaking population is easily identified by their behaviour and attitudes, not by their names or papers, nor by their facial features, because they only live in isolation, without much contact with other Congolese communities.
- 11.** As far as political parties are concerned, there are no political parties in the DRC with an ethnic profile. Moreover, the Congolese law on political parties is very clear on this point: any party must have a national scope, and representatives and activists in all parts of the country and belonging to all ethnic groups.

Religion in Kinshasa

Question: To what extent can newcomers to Kinshasa (e.g. from the Eastern provinces) expect help and assistance from his/her religious community?

- 12.** Apart from the role of the family, the church is an important factor in the DRC: religion plays an important role in this area. These include the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches, and the revivalist churches (Evangelical and Pentecostal churches). The latter are very numerous. This importance is explained by the fact that the Congolese population is generally very religious and goes to church. So, there is a lot of connection at the level of the Church. This is a factor beyond the family, the community and the ethnic groups or clans. The bonds between people who attend the same church can be very strong. We have recently seen an appeal to collect funds (clothes, food and money) for the neediest who are part of the church, and from time to time this collection is done during disasters or unfortunate events (e.g. to support the displaced from Brazzaville in 2014, etc.). So, people from the east, or from another area, benefit from the assistance of the church without any discrimination.

Question: What types of services does religious communities provide in Kinshasa?

- 13.** As mentioned above, Catholic, Protestant and revivalist churches can provide help with food, clothing and sometimes some money. It is rare that churches can offer accommodation, and in those rare cases perhaps in schools or in the churches themselves, and therefore not accommodation in the proper sense of the word.

Question: What is the prevalence of religious discrimination in Kinshasa?

14. In general, there is no discrimination based on religion in Kinshasa.

Question: To what extent does Muslims risk discrimination in Kinshasa?

15. According to the Professor, it is very clear that there is no discrimination against the Muslim population in the DRC. The population in the DRC is predominantly Christian, about 90%, but Muslims have been making a breakthrough in recent years. More and more mosques are being built here and there, even in the Northern provinces. Furthermore, it should be noted that even the followers of the so-called "African" or "traditional" churches, of the messianic type, such as VUVAMU, BDK, the Church of Blacks in Africa, etc., are not discriminated against. They operate in complete tranquillity, subject to respect for the laws of the Republic.

Politics and social networks in Kinshasa

Question: To what extent is it possible to draw on political communities/movements for services as a newcomer in Kinshasa?

16. This is a delicate and shifting issue, like sand, which needs to be addressed at two levels. First, it must be taken into account that there are currently more than 600 political parties in the Congo, but the main parties are perhaps only a dozen. If the person has a real and concrete relationship, i.e. a connection, even from abroad, this affiliation can play a decisive role and the party can help the person. The important thing is that you must have a solid, effective and recognised affiliation, for example, having played a role and having had a position in the party structure.

Most spoken languages in Kinshasa

Question: What are the main languages spoken in Kinshasa?

17. It is a single language, Lingala, which was brought forward by the Belgian colonial administration, and was imposed in the Congolese army (the 'Force Publique'). This language was imposed in Kinshasa and in the major cities of the country; as a result, Lingala has become the popular language throughout the country, as a modern and simple language. One can speak Kiswahili in Kinshasa, especially in the family (for people from the eastern provinces: North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, Katanga); just as one can speak Kikongo in the family (for people from Ne Kongo), or Tshiluba (for people from Kasai); but Lingala must be spoken in Kinshasa: these are the four national languages of the DRC. In principle, people from the East do not have problems communicating because of this. Today, Lingala has become a cultural identifier for the Congolese, especially those in the diaspora. In the East, people usually speak Kiswahili plus French, the official language, but when they are in Kinshasa, they change, like all the other Congolese populations; they speak Lingala. Even in Goma, people speak Lingala to identify themselves as Congolese, and because it is a Congolese city. On the other hand, it is not clear that all the people in the East and in other provinces in the interior of the country speak French, the official language of the administration in the DRC. This is a question of school education.