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ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation

Query response on DR Congo: Internal relocation opportunities to Kinshasa (opportunities to settle, institutional support, housing, employment opportunities) [a-11748-2]

18. November 2021

This document was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to ACCORD as well as information provided by experts within time constraints and in accordance with ACCORD's methodological standards and the *Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)*.

This document is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection.

Please read in full all documents referred to.

Non-English language information is summarised in English. Original language quotations are provided for reference in the document or upon request.

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), an African NGO with offices in South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal, published a report in February 2021 on development pathways for the DR Congo which notes the following on the situation in Kinshasa:

> "The high population growth in DRC goes hand in hand with rapid urbanisation. [...] As a result of this rapid urbanisation, Kinshasa, the capital city with its population estimated at 12 million in 2016, and an annual growth rate of about 5.1%, is projected to be home to 24 million people by 2030. It will become the most populous city in Africa, ahead of Cairo and Lagos. This is likely to pose huge challenges without proper urban planning and management, and if the creation of employment opportunities for urban youth is not achieved. Nearly 75% of the urban population in DRC live in slums. This is 15 percentage points higher than the average for Sub-Saharan Africa." (ISS, February 2021, p. 10)

The ISS refers to a report on urbanisation in DR Congo by the World Bank published in 2018 which describes the formation of slums and access to housing in the following terms:

> "Failure to implement urban planning has been responsible for the proliferation of slums. The core of Kinshasa was originally built for a colonial citizenry. It grew to 400,000 inhabitants in the 1960s. No planned urban development was in place to absorb additional people, but Kinshasa has grown to just under 10 million and is projected to grow to 20 million by 2030. Conflict and post-conflict conditions in Central Africa have led to, and continue to generate, rural-urban migration. Few new arrivals in the cities can access formal land and housing markets. Private developers operate in an unregulated manner and cater mainly to the wealthy, leaving informality as the sole land- and housing-access option for all others, further engendering urban sprawl." (World Bank, 2018, pp. 52-53)

In its June 2019 edition, the Journal of Hydrology published a paper on urbanisation and water services in Kinshasa. The paper contains a map which is dated 2013 and outlines the extend of self-constructed housing in Kinshasa:

> "Kinshasa is situated on the Congo River. The city has grown, spreading southwards and eastwards from the riverbank [...] Although the city center is relatively structured, sprawling outskirts have mushroomed under the combined effects of rural exodus, rapid population growth and uncontrolled migration, as shown in Fig. 3." (Bédécarrats et al., June 2019)
>
> [Figure removed]

"Fig. 3. Types of land use, produced for the Kinshasa Metropolitan Area Strategic Master Plan (Guérin et al., 2013)" (Bédécarrats et al., June 2019)

In its 2021 yearbook, the Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa (CAHF), a think tank based in South Africa, provides the following information on affordable housing in Kinshasa:

> "The World Bank estimated that 73% of the Congolese population, equalling 60 million people, in 2018, lived on less than $1.90 (FC3 767) a day. This means that more than half of the population cannot access adequate housing or own a decent house resulting in an increasing number of informal settlements which are currently home to approximately 65% of the DRC's urban inhabitants. The lack of affordable housing finance, high costs of urban land characterised by weak tenure security, rising construction costs, and the prevalence of slums, challenge current efforts by government to alleviate the housing crisis. [...] Good quality dwellings in the DRC are those with floors, roofs and exterior walls constructed from durable materials. In Kinshasa, 81% of households live in these types of dwellings. In provinces, only 51% of households live in good quality housing. In the country, 23% of households live in good quality housing. Moreover, rapid urbanisation and lack of connectivity makes moving in the big cities very difficult. The lack of reliable means of transport limits employment opportunities for workers and prevents companies taking advantage of the economies of scale [...] Despite a surge in construction and housing supply, the price of units at more than FC49 567 000 (US$25 000) is well beyond the reach of employed low to middle income households in Kinshasa. While demand for affordable housing is evidently high, the few past and ongoing housing projects are skewed towards the needs of middle income and wealthy individuals. [...] In Kinshasa, a hectare in well-serviced residential areas costs FC198 268 000 (US$100 000), which is an indication of the higher values of serviced land. A one-bedroom apartment outside of Kinshasa's centre costs between FC694 000 (US$350) and FC4 957 000(US$2 500). Few Congolese can afford these prices." (CAHF, 2021, pp. 93 - 95)

The above cited World Bank report from 2018 elaborates on housing, access to services and governance in the following terms:

> "Failure to implement land development and titling procedures pushes the poorest to settle in flood- and erosion-prone areas or on the unserviced outskirts of the city, increasing their vulnerability to climate-related risks. Inadequate and haphazard settlement patterns create difficulties in supplying basic services in dense neighborhoods. Insecurity of tenure and natural hazards have led to a precarious housing situation and have provided disincentives for people to invest in their dwellings. [...]. Some neighborhoods are regularly flooded, and extreme precipitation can lead to loss of life and property. In 2015, 31 people lost their lives and about 20,000 people became homeless in the N'Djili neighborhood due to heavy rains. Urban governance is weak, and corruption is prevalent. The slums and informal settlements in Kinshasa have generated large 'autonomous' informal zones, where a lack of formal governance is met by informal systems of self-regulation." (World Bank, 2018, pp. 53-54)

In March 2021, the Germany-based website FloodList, which reports on flood events worldwide, writes the following on flooding in Kinshasa:

> "As of 17 March 2021 local media reported evacuations in areas close to the Tsiemé river in Brazzaville after flood water invaded homes. Flooding also caused severe traffic problems in the city. Local media in DR Congo reported 4 children died in the floods, with several houses swept away in Kisenso municipality in the east of Kinshasa." (Floodlist, 17 March 2021)

Living conditions in precarious settlements are further described by the World Bank report from 2018, which refers to social exclusion, unemployment and insecurity in the following terms:

> "Spatial segregation has also aggravated social exclusion in Kinshasa. The opportunities for individuals living in precarious settlements to take part in society are limited, and the needs of these communities are not systematically considered in urban planning and management, despite vibrant community organization life. The opportunities to effectively participate in local decision making are particularly limited in these spatially disconnected neighborhoods. The lack of participatory processes can further exacerbate social tension and instability. The explosive and uncontrolled population growth in Kinshasa has led to increased density in already crowded areas and urban sprawl, giving rise to increasing insecurity in poorly planned neighborhoods plagued by high levels of unemployment and extensive consumption of drugs. Furthermore, the lack of public lighting and access points to water exposes girls to sexual assault, including rape. The exclusion of people, often youth, from family circles due to cultural beliefs—particularly witchcraft—is also a scourge. Moreover, the anarchic construction and topography of insecure neighborhoods make them natural havens for criminals. Ravines, narrow streets, and a lack of pathways make it difficult for ill-equipped and unmotivated national policy makers to implement any public initiatives to secure these areas." (World Bank 2018, p. 54)

In 2021, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), a civil society organisation based in Geneva, published a report authored by Marc-André Lagrange, a senior researcher on conflict, humanitarian and security issues in central Africa, and Thierry Vircoulon, coordinator of the Observatory of Central and Southern Africa of the French Institute for International Affairs. The report describes the influence of youth gangs, so-called Kuluna gangs, in Kinshasa as follows:

> "Street youth gangs first appeared in the city in the 1950s. [...] The gangs gradually moved from Kinshasa's suburban areas, where the police did not dare to venture, to central districts and to military and police camps. They now even recruit their members among the children of police and army officers. 'You know, here, in Lingwala, the children of the PNC [Congolese National Police] are all Kuluna,' said an inhabitant from Lingwala, a municipality of Kinshasa. Today, besides Gombe, the downtown central district, where the government ministries and embassies are located, there are no areas in the city where the Kuluna gangs are not present. The gangs, however, are generally located in the poor neighbourhoods and slums of the city, including Lingwala and Barumbu, and in the central poor districts, like Kasa Vubu, Ngiri Ngiri, Kalamu, Bumbu, Makala and Limete. They are also present in military camps, such as Camp Muganga, N'Djili, Kimbanseke, Masina and Camp Ceta." (Lagrange and Thierry, 2021, pp. 3-4)

The World Bank report from 2018 notes the following on employment opportunities and poverty in Kinshasa:

> "Kinois [residents of Kinshasa] are constrained in their access to labor opportunities. [...] For cities to act as integrated labor markets and appropriately match job seekers and employers, they need to provide employment accessibility. In Kinshasa, 80 percent of trips are made by foot, which sharply cuts the distance that can be traveled to work and hence access to job opportunities." (World Bank 2018, p. 48)
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> "Poverty in the Democratic Republic of Congo is high for the country's rate of urbanization. [...] Kinshasa fares better than the rest of the country. Living standards of households in Kinshasa are higher than in the rest of the country, and the poverty rate is lower. [...] Still, within Kinshasa, wealth decreases with distance from Gombe [downtown central district]. In Kinshasa, women and youth are more likely than men to be unemployed. Unemployment is very high in the city: 77 percent of the population is either unemployed or underemployed (IMF 2013). The International Labour Organization (2009) reported that the national unemployment rate increased to 6.0 percent in 2008 from 5.7 percent in 2007, and that females and youth are more vulnerable to losing their jobs or suffering income losses." (World Bank 2018, pp. 27-29)

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) report from February 2021 notes the following on multidimensional poverty in Kinshasa, including information on water and sanitation infrastructure and access to electricity:

> "The poverty rate in Kinshasa is lower than the national average, although it has decreased slower than in rural and other urban areas. Poverty is not just a lack of money. Poverty is multidimensional, thus, measuring poverty by focusing only on the monetary aspect can be misleading. For instance, malnutrition, lack of clean water, health services, electricity, or education are examples of poverty that go beyond the income considerations. The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows that 64.5% of Congolese are multidimensionally poor with 36.8% of them in severe multidimensional poverty." (ISS, February 2021, p. 12)
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> "The DRC is considered to be Africa's most water-rich country with more than 50% of the African continent's water reserves, however, millions of Congolese do not have access to safe water. Water and sanitation infrastructure is extremely dilapidated and inadequate, even in the capital city, Kinshasa." (ISS, February 2021, p. 19)
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> "Access to electricity is heavily biased in favour of the urban and mining areas, notably Lualaba and Haut Katanga provinces where the copper and cobalt industry is concentrated. [...] Access is also uneven across the provinces, ranging from 44% in Kinshasa to 0.5% in Kasaï Occidental. [...] The existing and very limited power supply is also unstable, and electricity shortages and power blackouts are recurrent. For instance, it is estimated that, in Kinshasa, about 21% of those who have access to electricity receive less than four hours of power per day, and on average, electricity shortages occur 10 days per month in the country." (ISS, February 2021, pp. 20-21)

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provides information on social assistance in African countries on its "Social Assistance in Africa Data Platform". The undated report on DR Congo states that it is based on latest available data between 2010-2020 and provides the following information on social assistance in DR Congo:

> "The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) introduced social insurance laws such as the work injury, family allowances and the old age, disability, and survivors' benefits before 1961. Independence attained in 1960, was followed by civil war and temporary fragmentation of the country, which has affected the provision of social protection. As at 2019, DRC did not have a social assistance programme." (UNDP, undated)

The Brookings Institution, which describes itself as a non-profit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C., features a blog on its website which is published in cooperation with the World Bank. In a blog entry from September 2021, it describes a cash transfer program developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support poor people in Kinshasa:

> "Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is a case in point. The social and economic effects of the [COVID-19] crisis have been devastating in this megacity of 15 million people, two-thirds of whom were poor pre-pandemic. Job losses, price increases, and a drop in remittances quickly increased the financial vulnerability of most households. The situation called for a large-scale emergency cash transfer program, even if none of the prerequisites were in place: no program administration to build on, no social registry or fiscal records to target beneficiaries, and a weak financial ecosystem to make payments. In short, the program had to be built from scratch, remotely, and fast. The DRC Social Fund took up the challenge with the Solidarité par Transferts Economiques contre la Pauvreté à Kinshasa (STEP-KIN) program. What was the plan? […]
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> In three months, STEP-KIN identified, registered, and paid more than 100,000 individuals in 50 poor neighborhoods, becoming the largest cash-based operation in Kinshasa. The program is now expanding to 250,000 recipients for a total of $37.5 million to be transferred in monthly payments of $25. The first 6,500 randomized post-distribution surveys show that the targeting worked, i.e. beneficiaries are poor and vulnerable, with 40 percent unemployed and the remaining 60 percent earning less than $100 per month on average. They also document that the program's objective is achieved: Recipients cash out for (i) meeting food needs, (ii) spending on health and education, (iii) reinvesting in their livelihoods, and (iv) paying rent." (Brookings, 8 September 2021)

In November 2021 the UN News Agency publishes a press release on acute food insecurity in DR Congo, noting the following on Kinshasa:

> "The number of Congolese in the crisis phase of acute food insecurity, is higher than any other country analysed by the IPC [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification]. The new IPC report, which shows even the capital Kinshasa is badly affected, forecasts the alarming hunger numbers are likely to remain unchanged through the first half of next year." (UN News Agency, November 2021)

The above cited report from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) which was published in November 2021 analyses the period from September 2021 to August 2022 and is available in French. It refers to Kinshasa as one of the most affected provinces in terms of the number of acutely food insecure people and reports that 1,6 million people in Kinshasa are affected:

> "En terme de nombre des personnes en insécurité alimentaire aiguë, les provinces les plus affectées sont l'Ituri (près de 3 millions de personnes), le Kasaï (2,1 millions de personnes), le Kasaï Central (près de 2 millions de personnes), le Kasaï Oriental (un peu plus de 2 millions de personnes), Kinshasa (1,6 millions de personnes), le Kwilu (plus d'un million de personnes), Lomami (1 million de personnes), le Nord-Kivu (2,5 millions de personnes), le Sud-Kivu (1,2 millions de personnes) et le Tanganyika (1,3 millions de personnes)." (IPC, November 2021, p. 2)

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