

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

(October 2011)



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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Food and basic supply

Local markets usually provide basic staple food. Some shops and supermarkets also have imported products for household consumption. Most families buy food on a daily basis. There are state-owned companies supplying water and electricity to households all over the country, however, only in the urban areas. The water supply depends on the electricity supply and the electricity company is facing technical problems to provide electricity regularly.

Transportation

Land transportation is a problem insofar as there are practically no roads that connect one city to another. Trips can take weeks if not months to cover relatively short distances. Railway transportation is available between some cities only. Yet the trains are mostly in such a precarious condition that people fear to put their lives on the line by using this mode of travel. Air transport is smoother than any other mode, but since the country has different administrations, the possibility to travel is highly restricted. Access to remote areas is very difficult.

Buses and taxis in Kinshasa

One way is approximately 0,25 \$ for a bus and 0,5 \$ for a shared taxi. Parked Taxi : about 5 to 10 \$ one way and 15 \$ a hour (i.e. at Airport or Luxury Hotel) Euro Car, AVIS and others car hiring companies: approximately 100 \$ with a driver and 80 \$ without driver a day. There is a public transportation company that is starting in Kinshasa and in major cities with new buses.

Two public transportation companies (Société de Transport Urbain au Congo - STUC- and City Train) are restarting in Kinshasa and in other major cities with new buses.

There are small private societies involved in public transportation between Kinshasa and Matadi for about 30\$ with taxi and 15\$ by bus. Kinshasa – Boma/Muanda: 45\$ and between Kinshasa and Kikwit (in Bandundu Province) for about 25\$ for a bus and 60\$ for a jeep taxi.

Rail

Five major separate railway systems exist in the DRC. The oldest line links the ocean port of Matadi to Kinshasa. The longest line, Ilebo-Dilolo-Lubumbashi, connects the mining area of southern Katanga Region to the port of Ilebo on the Kasai River and ultimately to Kinshasa by the Kasai and Congo rivers. There are other minor systems in north-east Congo. The 140-km Mayumbe railway in Bas-Congo links the ocean port of Boma to the agricultural area of Tshiela and Cabinda.

Air

The country's major international airport is N'Djili in Kinshasa, which is served regularly by a number of international airlines en route throughout Africa and direct to Europe and Asia. Private carriers and small charter companies support air travel within DRC, and since the installation of the TNG some flights between Kinshasa and the East are now operating. Loano in Lubumbashi is also an international airport.

Fares of international flights (return):

From/to Brussels: +/- US\$ 960
From/to Paris: +/- US\$ 1,635
From/to Johannesburg: +/- US\$ 536
From/to Nairobi: +/- US\$ 942
From/to Rabat: +/- US\$950

Domestic flights, from N'djili (FIH) to the following destinations:

Approximate one-way prices:

FIH > Bandundu : +/-120 \$	FIH > Kisangani : +/-260 \$
FIH > Matadi : +/-125 \$	FIH > Mbandaka : +/-200 \$
FIH > Mbujimayi : +/-170 \$	FIH > Tshikapa : +/-250 \$
FIH > Kananga : +/-170 \$	FIH > Kalemie : No Flight from FIH
FIH > Lubumshi : +/-290 \$	FIH > Kahemba : +/-150 \$
FIH > Kindu : +/-320 \$	FIH > Bumba : +/-400 \$
FIH > Kikwit : +/-130 \$	

Ferries

Goma > Bukavu (on boat): +/-40 \$

The ferry between Kinshasa and Brazza still exists (cost is about 30 \$ one way/ 5 rotations daily).

Brief description of the telecommunication system

The state-owned National Mail and Telephone Office (OCPT5) faces competition from private companies both in the postal as well as the telecommunication sector. Many persons prefer to use the services offered by private companies as the OCPT is generally conceived to be poorly functioning. Over the last couple of years the mobile phone services provided by a variety of private companies have virtually replaced OCPT.

Post

There are many companies, both state and private owned, that offer postal services (to areas where access is possible). These companies include the National Mail and Telephone Office (OCPT), DHL, Kin Service Express and other local agencies. However, it is reported that the state owned OCPT is not operating properly, and due to this, they do not have many clients anymore.

Phone system

The national wire telecommunications network of OCPT is considerably deteriorated and has been overtaken by the cellular expansion. GSM mobile phone providers have virtually replaced the state-owned telecommunications company, ensuring people's access all over the country to both domestic and international telecommunication.

Thus, while landline telecommunication systems exist but with very limited function, the preferred telecommunication option among the general public is mobile phones and/or the internet. This also means that the use of fax in the DRC is very limited.

The country code for the Democratic Republic of the Congo is +243. There are no prefixes in place for the regions.

Internet

Internet connections are available in the country's bigger cities. There are many Internet providers such as Vodanet – Microcom, Cyber Net, Standard Télécom, Iburst Africa/DRC, Comax. The connection is about 450\$ to 1000\$ and the monthly cost is from 100\$ to 300\$ according to the needs. Prepaid option is also available.

A monthly internet subscription costs approximately US\$ 20 but cheaper options can also be found. One hour in an internet café costs around US\$ 2.

Cell phone

As mentioned above, over the last three years, GSM mobile phone companies have all replaced the state-owned telecommunications company OCPT. This has made it possible for people all over the country to communicate and exchange information and has also ensured international telecommunication.

Cellular phone services are offered by private owned companies such as Vodacom, Zain (that has recently replaced Celtel), Standard telecom, Sait-Telecom, Congo-Chine Telecom, and Starcel. All main cities are covered by mobile phone companies.

II. HOUSING

It is difficult to describe the housing situation in general terms. There are no official real estate agencies, which makes it impossible to get trustworthy information on availability, rents, sale, etc. Although renting is the most common type of accommodation, people who have the money and the opportunity often buy a piece of land on which they build a house for themselves.

There are no administrative impediments for buying and selling land, save the fact that a great deal of caution should be exerted in real estate purchase. Some people have bought property that has been sold to two or more other buyers. In DR of Congo, operate so-called 'Commissionaires', who are a sort of 'moving agencies'. These people have a list of places recorded on paper and sit at a corner of a street with their boards. They are handy in finding places of all sorts (houses, shops, flats...) They'll take you to places you'd be interested in looking at. The commissionaires play an important role in finding a house in Kinshasa because they are in contact with owners. They have 10 % of the deal (purchasing price or monthly rent). And reliability depends on individuals.

Accommodation

- 1) 50 to 200 \$ monthly rental for an apartment of 1 or 2 bedrooms depending on the area (with kitchen, bathroom and dinning room).
- 2) Hotel: +/-50upto150\$aday
- 3) Meal: +/-20\$

Land purchasing

- 1) Purchasing certificate (mainly delivered by customer Chief)
- 2) Rent contract (at the Cadastral office)
- 3) Value making : building of house even the smallest
- 4) Record Certificate: 3 years after value making. It is a definitive ownership prove.

House purchasing

- 1) Purchasing certificate (made by the seller)
- 2) Estate Certificate for ownership transfer (at the town hall)
- 3) Taxes (Urbanism and Land Offices)

Rent

Six months guaranty with three prepaid months + one month as Commission) depending on places in the city. In luxury compounds the prices hereafter are multiplied by two or three.

- US \$ 50 to 100 per month for an apartment of one bedroom including dining room, kitchen, bath room and Water closet
- US \$ 100 to 200 per month for an apartment of two bedrooms including dining room, kitchen, bath room and Water closet
- US \$ 250 to 500 or 1000 per month for an apartment of three bedrooms including dining room, kitchen, bath room and Water closet

Housing provisions

Available for vulnerable cases (including shelters for victims of trafficking)

Elderly people are accommodated in some public homes in Kinshasa and in some provinces in the DRC, although very limited.

Street children are taken in charge by some NGOs and churches until their reintegration in the family or in socio-professional life by some adults and vocational trained ones.

IOM Kinshasa has upgraded two street children centres of Don Bosco's Salesians Nuns congregation in both Kinshasa (Mazzarello House) and Lubumbashi to be used if there are victims of trafficking under the Southern Africa Countries' Trafficking Assistance Programme. This programme aims to prevent and fight against counter trafficking in the African Southern Region.

III. HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE

Basically in every large city there is a general hospital, private clinics and health care centres to provide health care services to the population. Rural areas, by contrast, do not always have these facilities nearby. Even though health care is provided in large cities, it is recommended to have certain ailments treated in hospitals abroad since most hospitals do not have the necessary equipment -The ones they have, have not been renewed for several decades. So anything from a stroke to head surgery or implants is often recommended for treatment abroad. Most cases are referred to doctors in South Africa, Belgium or France.

In public hospitals treatment is cheaper than in the private ones. In despite this, it is not easy to access due to the general poverty in the country. Patients are transferred to a superior medical level for a serious health problem.

Consultation fee and consulting with a physician: about 5, 10 to 20 \$

Medical and Hospitals structure

Small Health Post (dispensary, medical points) for minor health problems
Health Centre: for minor and serious health problems

General Hospital and Specialized Centres: for minor, serious and special health problems
Clinic: for serious, special and complicated health problems.

Medicaments for the treatment of some diseases (TBC, malaria, hepatitis, children's diseases, HIV) are available in Small Health Posts (dispensaries, medical points), Health Centre, General Hospital and Specialized Centres and in Clinic. There is no health insurance system in DRC. There are many Small Health Posts (dispensaries, medical points) and Health Centre in each Commune in Kinshasa and in each Administrative Sector in Regions. There is one General Hospital and Specialized Centre in big towns as well as in Administrative Territories in Regions and there are some Clinics (public and private) in Kinshasa.

Info on AIDS from the AIDS National Programme

Blood test

This test is almost free of charge since many medical institutions are in programme with the AIDS National Programme with the help of International Aid. There are many hospitals and medical centres in the country where HIV test can be made. In Kinshasa, apart from INRB (National Institute of Bio-Medical Research) and Ngaliema Clinic; there are other centres such as:

- Centre de Victoire: 61, Avenue Victoire, Commune de Kasa-Vubu
- Centre de Traitement Ambulatoire (CTA), Avenue Kabinda – dans l'enceinte du Centre de Dépistage de la Tuberculose (CDT), en face de la Radio Nationale
- CSAC AMOCONGO, 12 Avenue ASSOSSA, Quartier Salongo/Kasa-Vubu
- AMOCONGO – N'djili, 12 Rue Londo, Quartier 9, Commune de N'djili
- FEMME PLUS, 112 Rue Lokelenge/Ngiri-Ngiri et sur 70 Avenue Muanza, Commune de Kisenso
- Laboratoire National de Référence, Pavillon 11, Hopital Général de Kinshasa
- CHECK UP POUR TOUS, Avenue de la Montagne – Commune de Ngaliema

AIDS treatment

1. Patients medical follow up (20 % in the country and 80 % in Kinshasa)

- a. Opportunist infections treatment
- b. Anti Retro Viral: 29 \$ per month

As regards HIV/AIDS treatment, the follow-up can be divided into different types:

This treatment can be divided into two levels, both of which are free of charge:

- Treatment against opportunistic infections;
- Anti-retroviral Treatment.

In addition to these two levels of treatment the patient can also be treated with prophylaxis using Cotrimoxazol. This treatment can be initiated before the Anti-retroviral treatment is started or be used as a complementary treatment during the antiretroviral treatment.

Several hospitals and clinics in the private sector as well as in the public sector offer HIV/AIDS treatment in Kinshasa, such as:

- Kinshasa General Clinic
- University Clinic
- Ngaliema Clinic

- Kitambo Clinic
- Bondeko Clinic
- Yolo Medical Clinic
- Saint Joseph Hospital
- Nganda Center
- Kinshasa Medical Center
- Gombele Medical Clinic
- Roi Baudouin Clinic
- N'djili Hospital
- Marie Biamba Mutombo Clinic

In addition to these public and private hospitals and clinics, there are also NGOs which provide the same assistance, such as Action Communautaire Sida (ACS) and AMOCONGO.

HIV/AIDS treatment is generally available also outside of Kinshasa, including the provision of antiretroviral medications. The treatment is free of charge. However, some patients pay for treatment when they can afford it. Persons that pay for their treatment often do so to avoid hospitals using free-of-charge medicines.

2. Psychological follow up taken in charge by NGOs.

- a. AMOCONGO: Coins des avenues de l'Enseignement et des Huileries
- b. Fondation Femmes Plus: Mme Bernadette MULEBWE, Directrice Nationale
- c. ALPI: Apostolat pour la Libération des Personnes Infectées, Mme Docteur Numbi, Directrice Nationale, Avenue de l'OUA, Commune de Kintambo, Kinshasa.
- d. Programme National de Lutte contre le SIDA (PNLS/CPCDV): Dr Darius MAKELA, Avenue des Huileries, Kinshasa.

1. Patient biological follow up (complete and permanent follow up): about 30-50 \$ per month
2. Statistic : 4,5 % for 58 millions of inhabitants in DRC , 20 % in Kinshasa for about 7millions of inhabitants.
3. Prevention activities:

- a. Public awareness
- b. Transfusion security
- c. Sexual Transmissible Infections prevention and treatment
- d. HIV Mother-Infant prevention and treatment

Concerning the HIV/AIDS problematic, many NGO's have been created to deal with HIV infected persons in general. They have come together under different platforms to help out orphans, widows, widowers living with the virus.

Some of the most important NGOs are:

• Réseau Congolais des Personnes Vivant avec le VIH/SIDA

19, avenue Bangala, Commune de Kintambo, Kinshasa

• Le Forum Sida (FOSI)

Avenue Kasa-Vubu dans l'enceinte de AMOCONGO

• Fondation Femme Plus

132, avenue Lokolenge, Commune de Ngiri-Ngiri, Kinshasa

Tel : 243 88 01920

- **Apostolat pour la Libération des Personnes Infectées du VIH (ALPI)**

Avenue de l'OUA n°20, Commune de Kintambo, Kinshasa

Tel: 243 89 41 743

Email: alpi_rdc@yahoo.ca

- **Population Services International/AIDSMark**

Association de Sante Familale Building Shell No. 12

Blvd. 30 Juin (coin 30 juin and Wangata) Kinshasa 1, DRC

Tel. / Fax: 011-243-12-20544 (Fax after 19:00 zulu)

Email: 103361.3624@compuserve.com

URL: [http://www.psi.org/where we work/congo kinshasa.html](http://www.psi.org/where_we_work/congo_kinshasa.html)

- **Center for disease control and prevention**

Dr Kandjoura Drame, Coordinator Kinshasa DR Congo

Tel.: (+1 321) 953 9026

Email: Kandrame@yahoo.fr

IV. ECONOMY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Since the job market is inundated with graduate job seekers from university, it is hard to find a good job. Even the best diploma is mostly useless. Recently, non-governmental and international organizations have been the major employers, and most of the jobs created are in the development field. Typical activities include project management, logistics, and radio operations.

Generally speaking, there is a higher salary for persons who do have a university diploma. Job announcements are rarely advertised in newspapers. They are passed by oral propaganda to close friends and relatives -save for the very few cases where advertisements are posted on the gates or in the lobby of a company. More often than not, companies advertise a position for the sake of observance of internal regulations only. It is customary to select an insider even prior to posting the job advertisement.

Provided that some arrangement or a sort of agreement is made prior to return, no expectations should be raised as to financial assistance and pension money. Pensions are not a customary practice in the Republic. Big companies used to pay pensions to retired workers, but now the social security scheme is ineffective. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security can be contacted, however, more for specialized counseling with regard to mechanism and structure to channel these cases.

Employment

There is no major sector that offers significant job opportunity since companies and other structures have been looted from the beginning of the 90s. In addition, civil wars have increased the crisis. To the National Office for Employment, there are other private Institutions (such as Job Factory) in charge of job issues but with limited capabilities. Small businesses and micro-enterprises are the main economic activities.

Banking

The banking system in the DRC is recovering after a period of turmoil. Foreign banks such as the Citibank, Belgolaise, Stanbic Bank, etc. are operating in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. Transferring money within the country can be done through 'money transfer operations', with

several agencies such as “Western Union”, “Mister Cash”, “Soficom”, “Solidaire” or “Money Gramm” that are operating in all urban areas.

Opening a bank account is a simple procedure; a person must write an application formally requesting the opening, fill out the necessary forms and make a deposit (between US\$ 100 and US\$ 3,000. Due to market challenge, saving bank account opening is now for free in Pro-credit Bank and in Congo African International Bank (BIAC = Banque Internationale pour l’Afrique au Congo).

The Congolese Franc (CDF) is the official currency of the DRC. The exchange rate is determined by the foreign exchange market. Some of the banks are listed below:

1. Banque Commerciale du Congo (BCDC)/Belgolaise

Boulevard du 30 Juin, Kinshasa
Tel.: +243 88 44 853/4 or +243 12 21 773/4/5/6
Fax: +243 12 21 770
Email : bcdc@ic.cd

2. Banque Internationale de Crédit (BIC)

191, avenue de l'équateur, Kinshasa/Gombe
Tel.: +243 99 10 819 +243 819937 99/ 81 81 30 367/ 81 88 43 790
Fax : +243 81 26 16 000
Email : bic@ic.cd

3. Banque Internationale pour l'Afrique au Congo (BIAC)

Madame Catherine TRAUTES Chargée de la Clientèle Avenue de la Douane n°1
Rond point FORESCOM, Kinshasa/Gombe
Tel.: +243 81 700 4002/4003/9010 +243 98 59 19 99
Email: contact@biac.cd

4. Citibank Congo

Coins des avenues Colonel Lukusa et Ngongo Lutete, Kinshasa/Gombe
Tel.: +243 88 40 015, +243 89 40 015 ou +243 81 88 40 015
Telecopie: +243 88 00 456

5. RAWBANK Congo

3487 Blvd du 30 Juin, Kinshasa/Gombe
Tel.: +243 89 81 010, +243 98 32 0000/0001 +243 81 98 32 000
Fax : 00377 99 63 1042 / 081 261 60 64
Email: contact@rawbank.cd

6. Union de Banques Congolaises (UBC)

Coins des avenues de la Nation et de l'Equateur, Kinshasa/Gombe
Telecopie: +243 81 261 60 63
Email : renseignements@ubc.cd

Money transferred from abroad

Getting money from outside of the country can be done through ‘money transfer operations’, with several agencies such as “Western Union”, “Money Gramm” or some other private agencies well known in Congolese communities.

Micro credit to start a business or buy a real estate

Both NGOs and international organizations implement micro-credit programs in the DRC but under various conditions (e.g. to belong to a certain group of society, normally groups considered as vulnerable, and the amount that can be received is limited). Micro-credit programs are commonly destined only for households having at least one of the members considered as “vulnerable” and are based on sustainable micro-projects to be defined with the candidate.

Recently also various financial banking institutions (e.g. Pro-credit, Finca, Hope-Drc, and Congo African International Bank) have opened up for access to micro-credits, but these are generally loans that have to be repaid.

Below is a list of some financial banking institutions:

1. FINCA RD Congo

- Address in KINSHASA: Sodimca Building, Colonel EBEYA and Maman YEMO avenues corner in Gombe Commune. Tel.: +243 81 50 97 198 - +243 89 82 22 854, Website: www.villagebanking.org
- Conditions for income generating activities:
 1. To be Congolese over 18 years-old and living in DR Congo (gender basis: man and woman)
 2. To have an commercial activity for at least two years
 3. To have a licence permit or an official authorization
 4. Credit is provided for a minimum of 400\$ to a maximum of 20.000\$

2. MUFESAKIN (Mutualité des Sages Femmes de Kinshasa)

- Address in KINSHASA: Avenue NGUMA N° 5, Jolie Parc Quarter (Kitambo Magasin place) Ngaliema Commune. Tel.: +243 81 512 14 16
- Conditions:
 1. To be a Congolese over 18 years-old and living in DR Congo (gender basis: man and women) or a NGO,
 2. To be a member of the MUFESAKIN by paying 6.000 Congolese Francs per person, and 12.000 Congolese Francs for NGO;
 3. Maximum of 100.000 Congolese Francs (115USD) for income generating activities at the beginning. This amount can be increased on the basis of one's management and reimbursement capacity with a 4 % of interest rate per month (48% per year).
 4. Credit can be obtained for: income generating activities, children school fees payment (for a period of 10 months of school year) and family consumption

3. HOPE RDC

- Address in KINSHASA: Lumumba's Boulevard and Huileries avenues corner, opposite to Regideso Building in Gombe Commune. Tel.: +243 81 49 26 793
- Conditions for income generating activities:
 1. No individual micro credit,
 2. Micro credit is applied for groups (association, Ngo or Church) of 25 to 45 persons
 3. To be a Congolese over 18 years-old and living in DR Congo
 4. To have an existing activity

5. Minimum of 80\$ to a maximum of 3.000\$ depending on one's capacity for a period of 4 months.

The loan is reimbursed in 16 instalments every week starting from the second week after the start of the reimbursement.

4. CTB-BTC Kinshasa

Address in Kinshasa:

Avenue Colonel Ebeya N° 15, Kinshasa – Gombe.

Website: www.btcctb.org

E-mail: Pierre.dulieu@btcctb.org

Opportunities to set up a business

In order to open a shop or office, certain procedures need to be followed. For instance, an authorization needs to be obtained and a commerce registration needs to be made to the Ministry of Commerce. The costs related to the procedures to be followed when opening small shops/offices are as follows, apart from monthly taxes to be paid:

Taxes (in Kinshasa):

- Authorization: US\$ 200
- Commerce Register (Identification): US\$ 60
- ANR : Agence Nationale de Renseignement (National Investigation Agency): US\$ 100
- Culture and Art: US\$ 50
- Environment: US\$ 50

It normally does not take long to go through this procedure. The person receives the papers as soon as he/she pays the fees. The time needed to proceed with these steps generally depends strongly on the company assigned.

Small businesses

- Public transportation : Taxi driving or Mini Bus
- Bar
- Shop of basic consumption items
- Hair dressing salon
- Clothes selling
- Public secretariat with Computer Training Centre
- Food shop
- Dress making with training facility
- Car spares shops (pieces or tires)
- Phones cards
- Small communication center (phone station)
- Pharmacy (drug store)

Custom Issues

The Ofida (Office de douane et accises) is the Government office in charge of custom in DRC. The taxation is based on "Ad valorem" or on "Specific" value systems.

Based on the law n° 009-2003 of 18 march 2003 on merchandises value determination (items final costs or the estimate until the entry point in the DRC), the payment of all relevant costs are done to the Ofida that will split it for concerned services¹.

Costs' details below must be paid and people must contact a Custom Agent or Agency who will follow the process. This is an indication for IOM Kinshasa custom clearance (IOM Kinshasa doesn't pay custom duty). The IOM Assisted Returnees will benefit from IOM Status. So, they will not pay the customs duty (all their items will be in IOM Kinshasa's name. None diplomatic Institution or person will pay the customs duty, based on item value.

Custom Clearance for IOM Kinshasa

N°	Description	Vehicle	Container		Personal Items
			20'	40'	
1	Customs duty	No cost	No cost	No cost	No cost
2	OCC/TALLY (Control Office tax)	118\$	118\$	118\$	118\$
3	ONATRA (per item type : A, B or C)	300\$ à 850\$	Depending on weight	Depending on weight	Depending on weight
4	Carrier Costs	-	1480\$	1480\$	-
5	Travel insurance (Matadi - Kinshasa)	125\$	-	-	-
6	Agency Visa	100\$	200\$	400\$	100\$
7	Ofida Entry Visa	40\$	40\$	80\$	40\$
8	Administrative and Operational Costs	450\$	lump sum	lump sum	lump sum
9	Bank charges	25\$	50\$	50\$	30\$
10	Ogefrem Office Tax	0,59% on C.I.F	0,59% on C.I.F	0,59% on C.I.F	0,59% on C.I.F
11	Ogefrem subscription	50\$	50\$	50\$	50\$
12	Handling	50\$	200\$	400\$	lump sum
13	Stripping	10\$	300\$	500\$	100\$
14	Agency Honorary	10 % de C.I.F	5 % de C.I.F	5 % de C.I.F	lump sum
15	Transport (Matadi – Kinshasa)	No cost	1400\$	2800\$	lump sum

Source: Information collected from the custom service²

V. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

There are universities all over the country, both private and public. They offer a wide range of courses and degrees at the undergraduate and graduate level. For doctoral studies and post-doctoral research, most people prefer to go overseas. Within the Ministry of education, there is a department tasked with the recognition of academic degrees. Those who can afford to pay for their children's tuition do not hesitate to choose a "good" private school for quality education.

¹ LEGANET.CD (on line): www.leganet.cd

² Information collected from the custom service

The organization of the educational system in the DRC is similar to that of Belgium, the country's former colonial power. Public education is guaranteed for both boys and girls but is not free of charge. The parents have to pay a tuition fee, which forms a practical obstacle for some families to enroll their children in school. Some families prioritize the schooling of boys over girls, who are often assigned domestic responsibilities instead.

Access to primary and high school or University

(including difference between private and public school)

As mentioned above, the education system in the DRC is in its organization similar to the educational system of Belgium. The school system has a total of twelve grades, with grades one to six being primary (*primaires*) and seven to twelve being secondary/high school (*secondaires*).

Education is not free of charge and parents have to pay a tuition fee, usually between US\$ 10 and US\$ 300 per trimester depending on the reputation of the school in question. Families with sufficient means will normally send their children to a school of good reputation to assure quality education.

There are three private foreign schools in Kinshasa that are mostly attended by the children of international workers in Kinshasa.

Although access to schooling is guaranteed, tuition fees are a practical obstacle for some families. The administration of the education school is centralized, with the overall control ensured by the Ministry of Education.

Universities, both private and public, can be found all over the country. There are many Universities, mostly in main cities that offer a wide range of courses and degrees at the undergraduate and graduate level.

For doctoral studies and post-doctoral research, most people prefer to go overseas. Within the Ministry of Education, there is a department tasked with the recognition of academic degrees.

Recognition of foreign diplomas

All foreign diplomas are recognized by the Ministry of Education through the Education General Inspection. They refer to UNESCO's report on worldwide education.

Vocational training courses, scholarship and grants available

The Minister of Labor and Social Protection is very active in the domain of vocational training, and the government has made noticeable efforts in this respect since its appointment. However, the vocational programs remain the initiative of local NGOs and International Partners in the country, such as ILO, UNDP and IOM.

The trainings are destined mainly to provide interested candidates with the basic knowledge on handmade, traditional occupations such as mechanics, electronics, electricity, secretarial skills, computer, dress making, hair and beauty courses, car driving, carpentry, brick making, and shoe making.

However, there is no scholarship or grants available. People have access to these training courses from their own means or with the help of NGOs or churches associations.

Education available for vulnerable cases

Although there is formally no discrimination between boys and girls in the access to education, girls in rural areas are often assigned.

VI. GENDER ISSUES

Although some women do work in high positions in the companies, generally speaking women are foremost housewives who take care of the children and the husband. Women are often considered an "aide" to the man. Women are usually enjoying greater opportunities in big cities than in rural areas where minds tend to be strongly ingrained with traditional customs.

VII. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NGO's

There are many associations and NGO's around Kinshasa and major cities. Support NGOs/Associations for orphans, street children and single mothers:

1. Fondation Femme Plus

Madame MULELEBWE bernadette, Directrice Nationale
132, avenue Lokolenge, Commune de Ngiri-Ngiri , Kinshasa
Tel.: +243 98 20 22 69 + 243 9911 162
E-Mail : femmeplus_rdc@yahoo.fr

2. Apostolat pour la Libération des Personnes Infectées du VIH (ALPI)

Madame Aline OKONGO Présidente
Avenue de l'OUA n°20, Commune de Kintambo, Kinshasa
Tel.: +243 89 41 743
Email: alpi_rdc@yahoo.ca

3. Population Services International/AIDSMark

Association de Santé Familiale
Avenue Tombalbay n°232
Commune de la Gombe/Kinshasa (DRC)
Tel.: +243 88 43 705 (Centrale)

4. APIFE : Association pour la Protection des Intérêts des Femmes et des Enfants

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5. BNPS: Bureau National de Promotion Sociale

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6. FOLECO: Fédération des Ong Laïques à vocation Economique

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7. UNAF: Union Nationale des Femmes du Congo

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8. Cause Commune

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