



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Capital: Kinshasa

Languages: French, Lingala, Kikongo, Kiswahili

Religion: 55% Roman Catholic, 35% Protestant, 5% Muslim

Population: 70,916,439

Refugees: 455,852

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): 2,052,677

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a Central African nation surpassed in size only by Sudan and Algeria and is the twelfth largest country in the world. Also known informally as the DRC, it is bordered by Angola, Central African

Republic, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. It has a tropical equatorial climate and terrain that includes dense tropical rainforests and mountains. Considered one of the poorest countries in the world, it is conversely extremely rich in economic resources such as gems, minerals and timber. The DRC was once a former European colony known as the Belgian Congo and has experienced several name changes, including Zaire, before arriving at its current name in 1997.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has suffered through many years of conflict, most recently initiated by tensions spilling across the border from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and civil war beginning in 1997. During this protracted time of violence more than five million people have died, making it the world's deadliest conflict since World War II. The people of the DRC have experienced intense suffering that has included injuries, disease, famine, property damage, human trafficking - particularly in the conscription of child soldiers - and sexual violence against women. Hundreds of thousands have had to flee to refugee camps in neighboring countries and over two million people are displaced internally.

Primary and secondary education is available in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but it is neither compulsory nor free. Parents have difficulty in securing enough money to pay any school fees; therefore formal education is unlikely to occur. Children may have educational opportunities in refugee camps, but it is not required and the camps are extremely ill-equipped. Congolese refugee children will be entering the United States public school system poorly prepared for what is expected of them as students. Lingering stressors of war, displacement and malnutrition will factor into their adjustment and acculturation.