

Overview of Country Programme

A country in transition

The Republic of the Congo is a country in rapid transition. National income is now 950US\$ per capita, and economic growth has been consistently higher than 5% for the last 3 years, although dependent on oil. Furthermore, the improvement of security, the consolidation of the democratic process, the strategic leadership of government and good coordination among United Nations agencies and donors contribute to provide an enabling environment for the respect of child rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

But a fragile country facing many challenges

In spite of being a rich country, more than 50% of the population live with less than 1 US\$ per day. Congo has also been affected by almost a decade of civil war and its democracy remains fragile. The lack of capacity of the government result in low absorption capacity and limited effectiveness and quality of public services. Despite windfall revenues from the oil boom, the national budget for basic social services remains low: 7% for health, 4% for primary and secondary education, and 0.4% for social protection. Continuing disparities remain affecting women, poor people and the indigenous populations. All those issues are among the main challenges to ensure universal and equitable access to basic social services.



Vital statistics for Congolese children

- ✚ Half of the population is aged less than 18 years.
- ✚ 185,000 children are born each year., but
- ✚ 225 children under 5 die every day , 57 of them of malaria
- ✚ 63,000 children are not fully immunized
- ✚ 3 children out of 10 are suffering of malnutrition.
- ✚ 2 out of 10 are not registered at birth.
- ✚ Every day, 4 women die due to complications related to pregnancy or delivery.
- ✚ One child out of 10 is out of primary school.
- ✚ 4 households out of 10 do not have access to safe drinking water.
- ✚ 7 out of 10 do not have adequate sanitation
- ✚ 150,000 people are infected with HIV/AIDS., 14,000 of them children under 12
- ✚ Half of new HIV cases affect young people

UNICEF interventions

UNICEF supports the Government of Congo, the civil society and the community to ensure the rights of every child in Congo to survival, development, education and protection, in the context of the country's commitment to achieve the Millenium Development goals by 2015 of halving poverty.

In order to achieve these goals, the country office support the government to ensure quality and access to basic social services and essential supplies. It also promotes partnerships with NGOs and religious organizations to ensure caregiver's and household's capacity to care and protect children. And it monitors children's rights and supports studies and research as a basis for advocacy for adequate national policies and laws to protect children

Major Achievements in 2007

Child survival (7.5 million US\$)

- 7,000 children lives saved thanks the national campaign of measles and malaria control,
- The cholera epidemic control contributed to the nationwide improvement of hygiene practices
- A national policy for free prevention and treatment of malaria and HIV/AIDS launched by the President.

- UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, UNFPA and European Union partnership for sector wide improvement of health systems, 40 million US\$

Education (900,000 US\$)

- Development of a minimum package of services and provision of learning and recreation materials for 5 community preschool centers
- Provision of education and recreation kits and libraries for 36 child friendly schools , covering almost 20,000 children
- Development of an education package for out of school children, including literacy and vocational training;
- Provision of safe water and sanitation in 4 schools covering almost 3,000 students
- Development of a sector policy letter and local plans of action for achieving education for all;

Protection (350,000 US\$)

- Development of a national plan of action for reducing sexual violence
- A pilot project on child trafficking resulted in repatriation of 40 children
- Development of a national plan of action for the improvement of rights of indigenous population
- Enrollment of 1,000 indigenous children in primary schools

HIV/AIDS (420,000 US\$)

- Integration of paediatric care in the national strategies, covering 462 HIV positive children,
- Free testing and counseling for 27,000 pregnant women, resulting in 803 HIV positive women being detected and taken care of.
- HIV/AIDS prevention for 52,000 young people through peer education systems and integration in national education curriculum
- Support for care and support programme taking care of more than 6,500 HIV orphans
- Assessment of HIV vulnerabilities among young indigenous people to improve prevention

Social policies (460,000 US\$)

- Technical support to improve the social protection component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Study on multidimensional child poverty study for developing policies to reduce of child poverty.
- Advocacy for the adoption of the code of child protection

Funding gaps

Survival: 3.5 millions US\$
Protection: 0.5 million US\$
HIV/AIDS: 0.5 million US\$

Priorities for 2008

Child survival

In the context of a sector wide approach among partners

- Ensure the delivery of a an essential service package during 2 mother and child health weeks to 700,000 children and 145,000 pregnant women
- Partner with churches to promote lifesaving behaviors in 400,000 households
- Improve water supply and sanitation in 112 schools, 34 health centers. And 8 villages
- Develop a national strategy for the control of vitamin and mineral deficiencies

Education

- Develop a national strategies for improving access to and quality of basic education
- Assess violence in schools and bottlenecks for achieving primary education;
- Ensure 80 schools become girl and child friendly through teachers training, supply of essential education package, rehabilitation and community and student involvement
- Implement communication strategies for improved parental care and enrolment of indigenous children;

Protection

- Mobilize partnerships for the implementation of the national plan of action for the improvement of the living conditions of indigenous population
- Consolidate the pilot project for the reinsertion of children victims of trafficking;
- Analyze structural problems related to birth registration and ensure advocacy to improve access of most vulnerable to birth registration.

HIV/AIDS

- Support the review of 2008-2012 strategic framework
- Support the national seroprevalence survey;
- Support capacity development in paediatric HIV care;
- Improve PMTCT coverage in two main cities.

Social policies and Communication

- Develop a national communication strategy for the adoption of life saving behaviors at household level;
- Update the national plan of action for children and women
- Produce a white paper on social policies to reduce child poverty
- Strengthen capacities in planning, monitoring and evaluation in pilot areas

Education: 1 million US\$
Water and Sanitation: 0.5 million US\$
Social Policies: 0.5 million US\$