



Democratic Republic of Congo
YOUNG PEOPLE
SPEAK OUT ABOUT
CLIMATE ISSUES

unicef 
for every child

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AS A NEW GENERATION GROWS UP
IN A WORLD THREATENED
BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION,
IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT
THAT TOMORROW'S WORLD
BECOMES MORE SUSTAINABLE.

Preface

A MESSAGE FROM EDOUARD BEIGBEDER, UNICEF DRC REPRESENTATIVE

Climate change and biodiversity degradation pose a direct threat to children's ability to survive and thrive. Extreme weather events such as heat waves and heavy rains are increasing in frequency and intensity, impacting the lives of children and destroying the infrastructure so essential to their well-being.

Flooding and erosion cause innumerable problems. They damage water supply and sanitation systems, spreading waterborne diseases to which children are especially vulnerable including cholera, malaria, and dengue fever. **Epidemics are becoming more frequent and increasing.** Nearly 90% of climate change-related diseases occur among children under five years of age¹.

Droughts and sudden heavy rainfall cause crop failures and higher food prices, resulting in **food insecurity** and other deprivations that can have lifelong consequences. Livelihoods are destroyed,

leading to enforced migration, disruption of schooling, **increased child labour**, and violence over the availability of scarce natural resources. This limits the opportunities available to children and youth.

In the DRC, **biodiversity degradation such as deforestation** is changing animal-human interactions between animals and humans. **Zoonoses**, diseases or infections that are naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans, are emerging, such as Ebola virus disease or Monkey pox².

Climate change is a long-term, unprecedented threat that is disproportionately harming children, youth, and their communities. So concrete action needs to be taken to protect future generations. In this context, the importance of ensuring children's access to basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation, nutrition and protection becomes a critical issue.



UNICEF can support, with the commitment and collaboration of key partners, necessary action to respond to climate crises. We have the resources to be innovative and creative, using our expertise to invest in large scale sustainable processes, practices and systems which will increase people's capacity to respond to future climate crises.

But if we are to make tomorrow's world healthier and safer for children and future generations, **we must work together and address current and future threats.** Combating climate change and preserving the environment requires **national leadership** to implement commitments that mitigate the impact of climate change on society with a focus on the most vulnerable, including children. It also requires collaboration and **partnerships**

Edouard Beigbeder



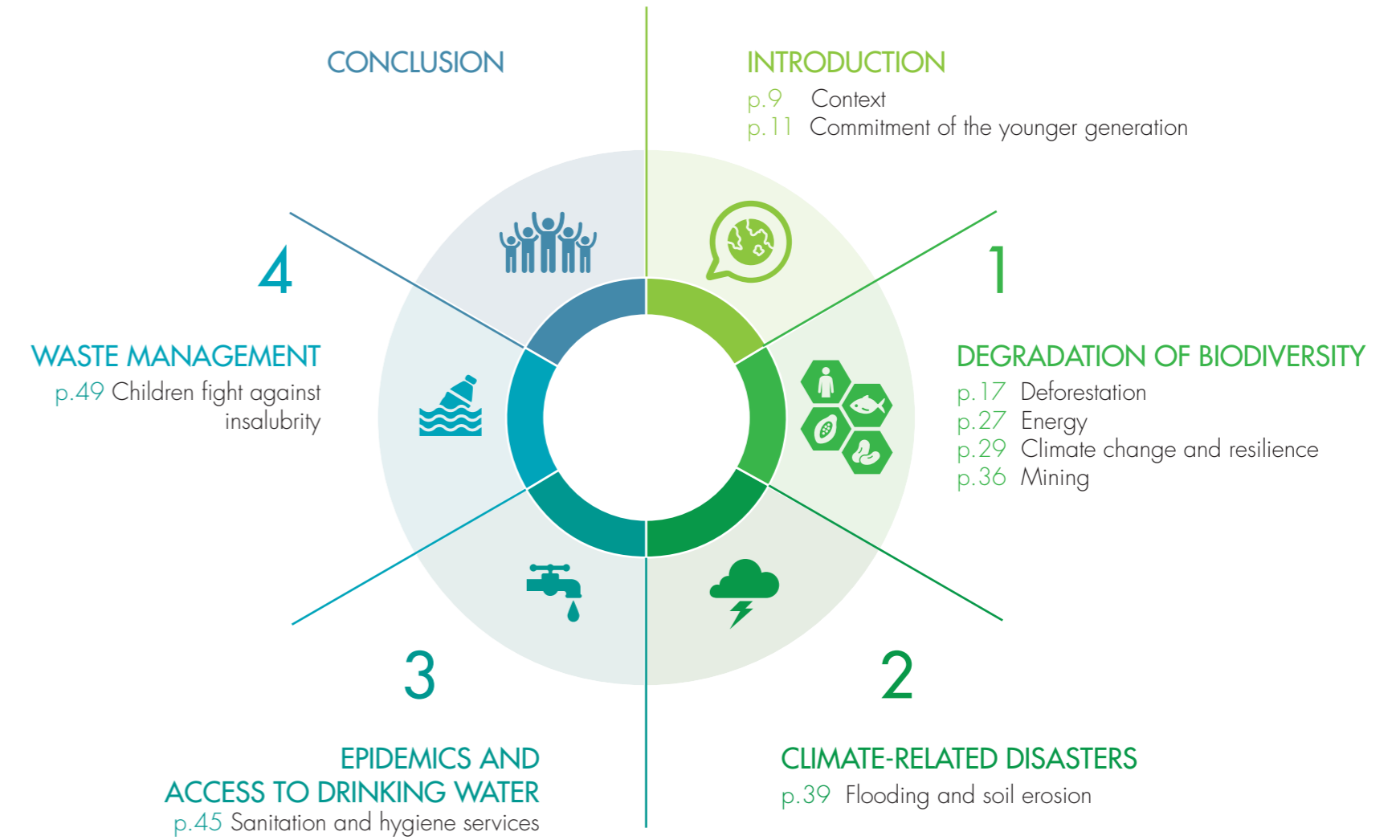
between the public and private sectors, including research, technical innovations and financial mobilisation.

Climate issues cut across all **17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030 by UN member states.** They have a direct impact on the quality of life. In particular, through SDGs 13, 11 and 6, it is incumbent on us to ensure environmental sustainability for children and future generations.

UNICEF is committed towards helping young people take action to protect their future and the future of the planet. We want to amplify their voices and encourage their participation in the fight against climate change and environmental conservation.

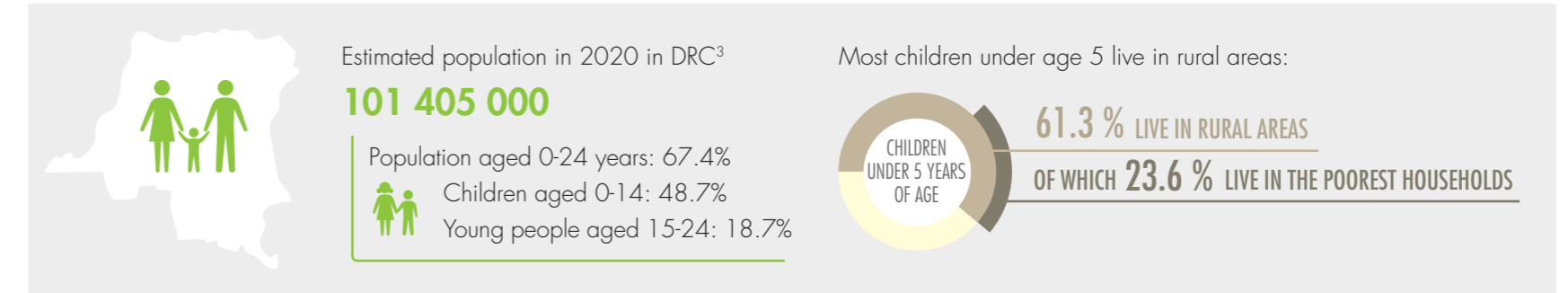


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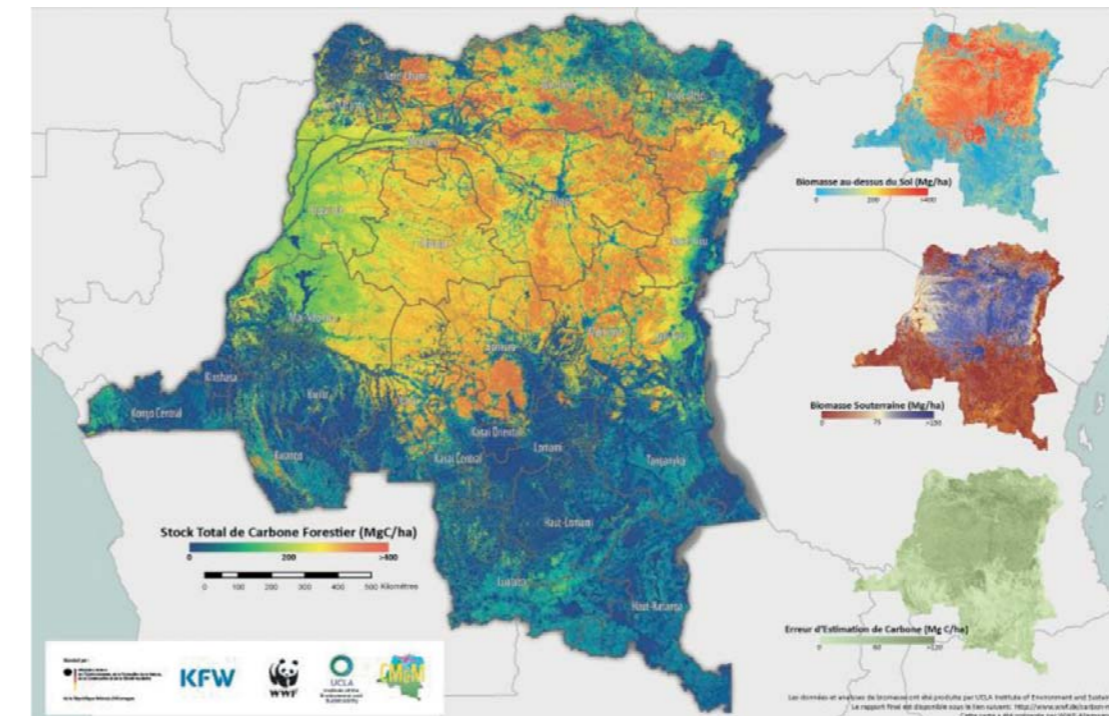


INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT



NATIONAL FOREST BIOMASS MAP OF THE DRC⁴

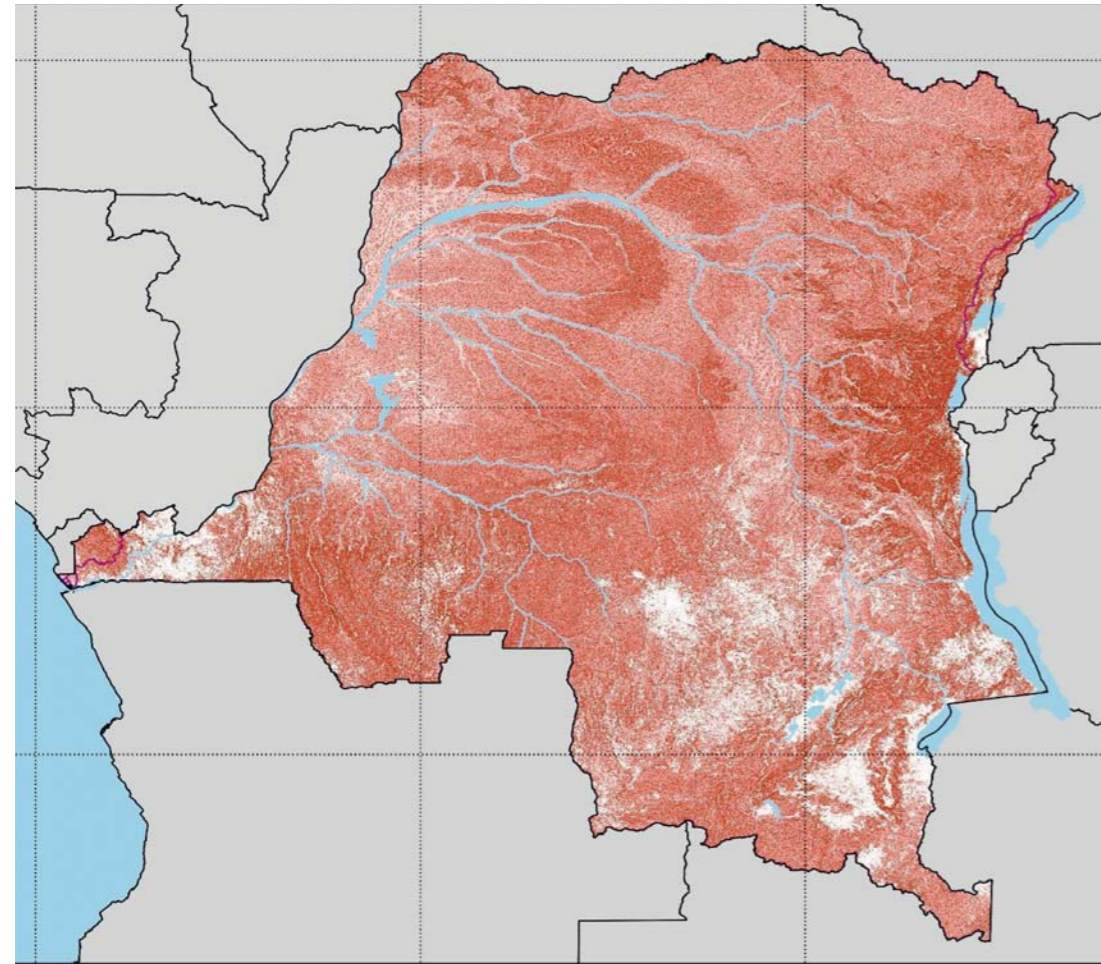


The DRC has great natural resources and biodiversity that are of worldwide importance. Few countries can match its vast expanses of vegetation and significant water resources. It has:

- The second largest tropical forest in the world with 152 million hectares of forest;
- 80 million hectares of arable land;⁵
- More than 1,100 minerals and precious metals including diamonds, gold, cobalt and coltan;
- Water resources which represent 13% of the world's hydroelectric potential.

Despite these favourable conditions, the country has for many years suffered from some environmentally damaging human activities, such as deforestation, poaching, river pollution and insalubrity.

SOIL EROSION DUE TO LOSS OF FOREST COVER⁶



Risque d'érosion du sol - Augmentation nette de l'érosion du sol en cas de perte de la couverture forestière (log mm/an)



Sources de données :
Risque d'érosion du sol : Waterworld version 2 (2014) Résultats issus du modèle du système Water world (utilisation non commerciale). <http://www.policysupport.org/waterworld>
Générée à partir de : scénario de simulation WaterWorld basé sur la suppression totale du couvert forestier dans les zones où des données Modis/Landsat existent, laissant le sol dénudé.

Projection cartographique : projection en Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area, latitude à l'origine de 5 et méridien central de 19
Carte préparée par UNEP-WCM, Cambridge

COMMITMENT OF THE YOUNG GENERATIONS



As the world's pre-eminent UN organisation for the wellbeing of children, it made eminent good sense for UNICEF in DRC to put young people at the forefront of a new initiative to take action over the country's climate change problem. Young people – including Child Reporters trained by UNICEF – received assistance to take part in discussions about waste management, access to clean water, the importance of education, the protection of fauna and flora, population resilience and community mobilisation to secure a healthier and more sustainable future.

Part of this initiative entailed Child Reporters travelling from all over the DRC to discover Virunga Park National Park in the east. Here local people are actively involved in efforts to protect the environment, develop agriculture, and defend natural resources, their work takes place in an environment that is often seriously insecure, principally because of the presence of a large number of armed groups. In the eastern city of Goma, Child Reporters were able to see how some people survive through recycling, while for others it's a daily struggle to access clean water and overcome climatic disasters such as flooding. In Western DRC, the party of Child Reporters met people their own age who are involved in cleaning and recycling to develop their communities. They saw the commitment of some young people to educate future generations about the dangers of climate change. In Equator Province, they discovered how young students cross the Congo River by dugout canoe to get to school. And in the central part of the country, in Kasai Oriental, they covered how deforestation is affecting livelihoods.

These various encounters led to the production of a documentary showing their commitment to tackle climate change and protect biodiversity in the DRC⁷.

Throughout the process every young person was free to express their opinions on issues that affect his or her social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. UNICEF, supported by the government, was giving young people a forum in which they could defend their rights and be involved in decisions that affected them. Aged 10 to 17, the Child Reporters comprised



Ketsia, 16 years old, Child Reporter trained by UNICEF, met with children in Kinshasa to exchange on the theme of climate, their dreams and their future.



girls and boys from all social backgrounds who examined key issues such as child protection, education, health and the participation of children in DRC policy making. **All the Child Reporters were introduced to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child⁸ and taught basic journalistic techniques.** As a result, the Child Reporters become more aware of their rights and how to make their voices heard through various communication media.

DOCUMENTARY

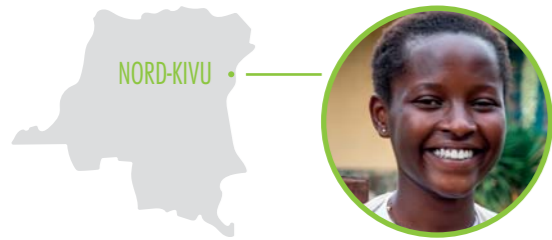
To see the documentary of the Child Reporters trained by UNICEF DRC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3OWhVA3UN4>



< Peggy, 16, explains his artistic process to Ketsia, Child Reporter. He creates costumes out of recycled cardboard to denounce the unhealthy conditions he suffers in his neighborhood of Kinshasa.

> Moïse, 17 years old, member of the Children's Committee, takes a selfie with a Child Reporter trained by UNICEF in Kinshasa and the choreographer Jeny Bsg. Together, they discussed their commitment to Congolese youth and the possibilities for the future.





KETHIA

16, Child Reporter trained by UNICEF, Goma



Kethia, 16, is a Child Reporter trained by UNICEF. She is very proud to meet children, teenagers and women living in the territory of Rutshuru and Nyiragongo in North Kivu to exchange views on climate and the environment.



KETSIA

16, Child Reporter trained by UNICEF, Kinshasa



Ketsia, 16, is a Child Reporter trained by UNICEF. She went to meet children, women and men who, mobilise their communities against climate change in the city of Kinshasa. Her personable attitude and consummate professionalism meant she played a leading part in recent documentary about climate change Democratic Republic of Congo: Young people facing climate issues produced by UNICEF DRC on the occasion of the World Children's Day, November 20, 2020.



DEGRADATION OF BIODIVERSITY



DEFORESTATION

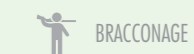


Forests in the DRC and elsewhere in the world provide an important ecosystem role in relation to air quality, recycling nutrients and purifying water. They also play a key role in offsetting climate change and are a rich source of biodiversity.

The DRC has one of the ten highest deforestation

rates in the world. Most of this loss of forest cover is due to **family farming or because of energy needs**. Access over who has access to these natural resources can lead to tensions between communities. These tensions can often trigger larger conflicts, resulting in large population movements.

OTHER AFFECTED THEMES



BRACCONAGE



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



WILDLIFE PROTECTION



GENRE



< A group of women make "Makala" (charcoal) in the forest surrounding the city of Goma.



NORD-KIVU
VIRUNGA, RUMANGABO



ALINE Eco-Guard

"I AM CONVINCED THAT WE [WOMEN] CAN DO THE SAME JOBS AS MEN."



Kethia, 16, is a Child Reporter trained by UNICEF in Goma. She met Aline, a woman who works as an eco-guard in the Virunga National Park in North Kivu Province in the DRC. The two of them discussed the importance of women's involvement in the protection of the environment and Congolese heritage.

"Sometimes people say that women are not capable of working, that the job of eco-guard is only for men," Aline said. "But with the emancipation of women, I am convinced that we can also do the same jobs as men. **I encourage young girls to work and protect our heritage.** When we grow old, it is they who will take our place, together we can succeed."





Aline also spoke about the need to involve future generations to protect wildlife and avoid deforestation.

"They must encourage their parents to plant trees, so that they do not cut down those in the park and destroy the forest. **The children must also understand that we must not kill animals, so they don't disappear.** Our animals attract tourists and in exchange our country gains something. [Some] people enter the park to poach, they set traps to catch the animals. We are here to monitor and prevent these activities."

Aline is aware of the dangers and insecurity linked to her job as an eco-guard, she works in a geographical area where numerous armed groups operate, yet she remains committed:

"In the park, there are also people who want to harm the population, we live with them, sometimes we clash. **Here in North Kivu [province], there is insecurity everywhere, sometimes we are threatened, but we always try to resist.**"

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

-  BRACCONAGE
-  PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
-  PROTECTION OF THE FAUNA
-  GENRE





ANDRÉ Eco-Guard

"SOMETIMES THERE ARE BABY GORILLAS THAT LOSE THEIR PARENTS."



André has been an eco-guard for 22 years. He has been working for the baby gorilla orphanage in Virunga National Park in North Kivu for 13 years. Kethia also asked him a few questions about his job, the protection of nature and of course, the gorillas. André is wearing a uniform with the L'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) logo. He explains to Ketsia that the Congolese it is a state institution that protects nature and takes care of wild animals and forests throughout the DRC.

"Some people enter the park to poach, so sometimes there are baby gorillas that lose their parents," André said. "As park rangers, **we have an obligation to protect these baby gorillas**. For example, we have recovered baby gorillas that were only two months old and five months old, after the death of their parents. We had to find a favorable place, almost identical to their natural environment, to care for them, because they could not live alone in the forest. Our team takes care of these little orphans, we replace their parents to some extent. The gorillas arrive here stressed; they are traumatised. So, we give them everything they need to feel like family. We have become their true friends. Every day and every night, at all times, we must be by their side. We have to feed them, play with them to reduce stress and do their medical follow-up. **We share many things with these gorillas**. We have very close ties and behaviors. The diseases that humans get are almost the same for gorillas, they have the same symptoms, they are often affected by digestive diseases and respiratory diseases."

André and his team provide all the necessary plants for the diet of the young gorillas to ensure the proper functioning of their bodies. High altitude gorillas tend to have a lot of hair and big bellies. Here, the little orphans are different. When they live in an environment that is not identical to their natural environment, there are problems with adaptation, growth and survival.



Mathieu Shamavu, a caretaker at the Senkwewe center in Rumangabo, cares for a small orphaned gorilla.



André stresses **the importance of raising awareness and involving children in the protection of nature**. He explains to Ketsia that climate and the environment are important factors in the care and development of these animals.

"**The children are our hope, the hope of tomorrow**. So, if this park and these animals are to be protected for future generations, **everything will depend on the education that we will give to children**. Education is not only limited to the school, it is necessary that the children visit this forest, this nature, these animals, and then we will hope to have children who grow up respecting the environment. We must develop in their minds a love for nature. **When you have love, you know how to protect.**"

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED



BRACCONAGE



PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT



PROTECTION OF THE FAUNA



NORD-KIVU
VIRUNGA, RUMANGABO



EMMANUEL



Eco-guard and tracking dog master

"KIDS NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED TO LOVE NATURE."

UNICEF-trained Child Reporter Kethia, 16, is in Virunga National Park, located in North Kivu, DRC, where she met Emmanuel, an eco-guard who works closely to stop poaching and forestry destruction - where necessary using tracking dogs.

"Our dogs have a vital role in protecting the park," Emmanuel said. **"They track down poachers, that is, all those who kill animals.** For example, there is poaching to obtain elephant tusks. We use people's smells to find them, and for that we have two breeds of dogs, the bigger ones look for the poachers' tracks in the forest and, once there, the smaller dogs take over and detect the elements that have been stolen. We have to explain to the children that dogs help us to protect nature. We humans are not able to find people who harm the park. **Kids need to be encouraged to love nature, to love dogs, because one day they will become dog handlers like us and they will work in our parks, but also in parks around the world.**"

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED



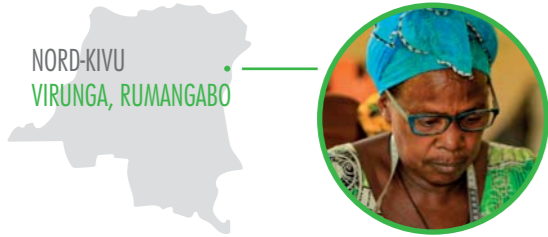
BRACCONAGE



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



WILDLIFE PROTECTION



THÉRÈSE Seamstress, widow of an eco-guard
 “OUR HUSBANDS WANTED THEIR CHILDREN TO KNOW HOW TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.”






Seamstress Thérèse has nine children and is a widow. Her husband was an eco-guard in the Virunga National Park. Thérèse works for the ICCN in Virunga National Park in North Kivu. The park is located in a geographic area which is notoriously insecure. The ICCN has identified several threats to this protected area: “illegal occupation”, “illegal charcoal production”, “poaching of large mammals, notably the hippopotamus”, “illegal fishing” and of course “the presence of armed groups and invasion by illegal mineral diggers”. There are sometimes violent attacks on the 700 eco-guards who protect this vast nature reserve. About 170 of them have died in the past 20 years. Since 2016, about 70 children have been deprived of a parent.

“Protecting our environment is very important, because our children grow up and study here, some have even graduated because of it,” Thérèse said. **“We have raised our children with the idea that they learn from this environment. Their father, although he left us, respected nature, the trees, and [loved] his work as an eco-guard. He had a lot of love for nature. Our husbands wanted their children to know how to protect the environment. Some worked in the forest to prevent cutting down trees for charcoal, others died protecting the gorillas.”**



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  BRACONNAGE
-  PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
-  PROTECTION OF THE FAUNA

“They understood the importance of nature and prepared a future life of their children,” Thérèse continued **“The children who grew up here have nature in their blood and they know why their fathers died, it is ingrained in them. If they see someone going to cut down a tree, you will hear them say, ‘Aaah these people are coming to destroy nature again.’ When they hear the sound of a fallen tree, they shout ‘Aaah again, they just cut down a tree, again!’ I would like to tell all**

our children to take into account the importance of trees, because if there are no trees, there will be no rain, and if it doesn’t rain, our plants won’t germinate, and here we live from agriculture. The tree protects us, it brings us shade and clean air.”



NOËLLA Seamstress, widow of an eco-guard
 “MY CHILDREN’S FATHER WAS A PROTECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT.”






Noëlla is a seamstress. She works for the ICCN in the Virunga National Park in North Kivu. She is a widow; her husband was an eco-guard for the park.

“With my husband’s death in the line of work, life was very difficult,” Noëlla said. “Through this work as a seamstress, I receive a salary, medical care and my children study expenses. This helps me a lot. **My children’s father was a protector of the environment, so my children are naturally aware of protecting nature. They don’t want people to destroy nature. We have a lot of animals in our forests, like gorillas, and a whole population living around them. We need to make people aware, so that they know that this environment helps us in many things. We should not destroy the forests, not cut trees, not kill animals.”**



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  BRACONNAGE
-  PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
-  PROTECTION OF THE FAUNA



JONATHAN 16, young lumberjack
"THESE TREES HELP PROVIDE FOR ALL OUR NEEDS."



Donatien, a UNICEF Child Reporter in Kasai Oriental, met Jonathan. Both teenagers are 16, and have exchanged views on the theme of deforestation. **Jonathan was forced to stop his studies because he couldn't pay his school fees.** At home, there are four children. Jonathan helps his father, a lumberjack, to support his family. The two of them cut trees for charcoal and firewood in Mbuji-Mayi in the province of Kasai Oriental, DRC.

"I accompany my father to cut down trees or to help him bring wood to the place where it is transformed into charcoal. These trees help provide for all our needs, to buy our clothes, eat and pay the rent. **Of course, cutting down trees**



Jonathan was interviewed by Donatien, a UNICEF-trained Child Reporter in Kasai.

is not a good thing. If we, do it, it's because we have no other work. You see, in this plot, there was only this mango tree. This family is short of money. So, they sold us their only tree. We cut it down and now they lack shade. Yet shade helps a man rest when he is tired."

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- BRACCONAGE
- PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
- PROTECTION OF THE FAUNA

ACCESS TO ENERGY



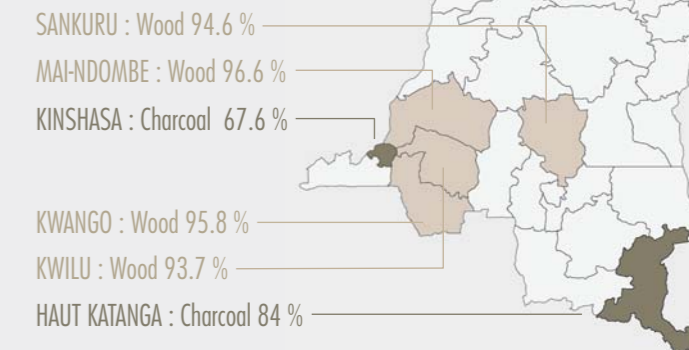
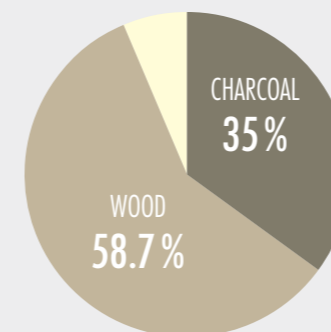
Lack of electricity directly affects the ability of children to do their homework or play in the evening. Likewise, it hampers their safety when traveling, and can affect the quality of their nutrition and health. Children throughout rural areas of the DRC are often responsible for collecting firewood or participating in the production of fuel, such as charcoal. Cooking

with wood and charcoal is also widely practiced, even though it harms children's lungs and can cause acute respiratory infections and low birth weights. Access to clean household energy for cooking, heating, and lighting is essential if global priorities such as improved health, gender equality, equitable economic development and environmental protection are to be achieved.¹⁰

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- CHILD LABOR
- DEFORESTATION
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- WASTE MANAGEMENT

SOLID FUELS FOR COOKING: USE¹¹ OF CHARCOAL AND WOOD





MATABI Eco-guard

"IF WE DESTROY [THE ENVIRONMENT] WE DESTROY OURSELVES"



Matabi is an eco-guard in the Virunga National Park. One of his missions is to fight against charcoal burning. Some people in the park cut down trees for charcoal production. He also informs the population about the dangers of climate change: "Once all the trees are cut down, it is difficult to have rainfall because it [makes it harder] to get rain," he said.

"Once all the trees are cut down, it is difficult to have rainfall because the forests regulate the climate. If we protect the environment in which we live, it has positive consequences for the climate. We must teach this to our children and our families, the environment is our life, if we destroy it, we destroy ourselves."



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- BRACCONAGE
- PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
- PROTECTION OF THE FAUNA

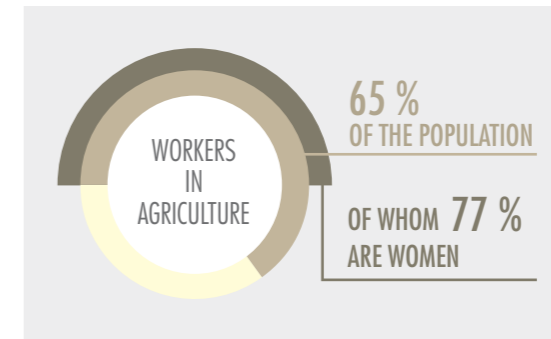
< A little girl helps her father with the preparation of charcoal. Pieces of wood are buried under a mound of earth so that carbonization can take place.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE



It is widely known that heavy rains and severe droughts can both equally affect agriculture and crops. In the DRC low yields can lead to conflicts, population movements and an increase in food prices which in turn leads to food insecurity. That is why the fight against climate change has now become a crucial issue in the country, not least because the agricultural sector employs 65% of the Congolese population, 77% of whom are women¹².



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
- RESILIENCE
- SCHOOLING
- DEFORESTATION

A little girl joins her mother as she prepares a cassava harvest in front of their straw hut in a camp for displaced people, Djugu territory, Ituri. This mother is in charge of providing for her children, especially their food. Despite the loss of her home and her fields, she continues to grow cassava by renting a small plot in the village where the IDP camp is located. 65% of the Congolese population works in the agricultural sector, 77% of whom are women.



NORD-KIVU
VIRUNGA, KIBUMBA



JEANNE D'ARC Farmer

"WE TEACH PEOPLE TO MAKE AN EFFORT NOT TO DESTROY THE PARK."



Jeanne d'Arc lives in Kibumba in North Kivu province. She is a farmer and part of an association of women farmers in Virunga National Park. In recent years, she has noticed that climate change is having a big impact on her crops.

"As I farm here, I can see that the park is being destroyed," she said. **"Sometimes the sun is too strong or sometimes there is too much rain that destroys our seeds.** We work as a group; we teach all our members to protect the park. This is important for the people and for our farming activities. We teach people to make an effort not to destroy our park. When our crops are

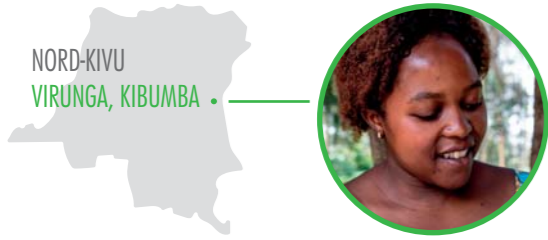
destroyed, we have difficulties to find other seeds to sow. But with our association, the members make a small contribution and, thanks to this, we can have other seeds to sow. I would like to give a piece of advice to the children: 'you must go to school!'. They need to be educated. [That way they can learn] not to grow up with the intent to destroy the park."

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
-  RESILIENCE
-  SCHOOLING

> Jeanne d'Arc, a farmer, crosses a potato field which has been blighted by climate change. She has been forced to adjust her farming methods by using agroforestry techniques and improved seeds.





FLORENCE Farmer

"[CHILDREN] HAVE TO LEAVE THE ARMED GROUPS AND STOP DESTROYING THE PARK."

Florence is the president of an all-women association which works to bring female farmers together to support each other as they develop agricultural projects.

"In our organisation, we teach women how to take care of themselves," she said "We mainly grow vegetables, like potatoes and beans. But we also learn about gender-based sexual violence."

The women's association is located in Kibumba in the territory of Nyiragongo in North Kivu. The population living in this area are regularly attacked by armed groups.

"We live in a beautiful environment," Florence says, "there are many trees in the park [Virunga]. I would like all the children in North Kivu to be in school. [But] some join rebel groups and go into the forest to destroy the environment, they cut down trees to make charcoal. Others are bandits, they rape and kill innocent people. **They have to go back to school. Because there they study, they get their diplomas and a good education.** After they graduate, they can find work. They have to leave the armed groups and stop destroying the park."



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
-  RESILIENCE
-  SCHOOLING



FLORENCE Farmer

"WE REMAIN IN EXTREME POVERTY BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS LOST."

Florence is a teacher at Buhumba Primary School and vice president of a women-only agricultural development association.

"These activities help us to take charge of ourselves," she said. "A mother who is a member of our association cannot lack the means because she has an activity that generates income. I myself, in addition to my work as a teacher, have learned to prepare bread. I make it at home, and then sell it, so I can find enough money to pay my child's school fees."

In her farming activities, Florence encounters many challenges: "The first difficulty we encounter when we cultivate [the land] is the heavy rains. **Erosion washes away the soil, the plants and [ultimately] our crops.** When this happens, we remain in extreme poverty because everything is lost."

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
-  RESILIENCE
-  SCHOOLING

Florence explains that there is a severe lack of drinking water and water for crops, which in turn creates risks for the population: "The second difficulty for our crops is the burning sun. **We are in an area where there is no source of water and no river, so we lack [sufficient]**

resources to water the crops in addition to not having enough drinking water for our homes. Sometimes people go to the forest to get water, but it is dirty water. In addition, they can be attacked in the forest. We live daily with these difficulties."



NORD-KIVU
VIRUNGA, BUHUMBA



PRISCA 12, 4th primary schoolgirl
"IF WE RUN OUT OF AIR, HOW WILL WE LIVE?"



Prisca lives in Buhumba, North-Kivu province, DRC. At the age of 12, she is already concerned about the degradation of the environment around her. Prisca has noticed that many children in her community are cutting down trees in the forest

to make fuel for household chores. This practice saddens her, as she is aware that deforestation has a direct link to the quality of the air she breathes and the dropping out of school of some of her peers.

"When I see the children go into the forest, it makes me very sad because they cut down the trees," she said "They go with their parents to cut them down and burn them, they make charcoal out of them. Some children do not go to school because of this. I ask these children to study, they must finish their studies and get their diplomas so they can become teachers and doctors. I would like to become a teacher, a school principal, so that I never forget the things I learn and that the students listen to me. I would rather they cut down the trees here, the ones that surround us in the village, not those in the forest. If there are no more trees, we will run out of clean air to breathe, and if we run out of air, how will we live?"

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- DEFORESTATION
- PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
- SCHOOLING



NORD-KIVU
VIRUNGA, KIBUMBA



DAVID Supervisor of agriculture projects
"EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL TO FACE THESE CLIMATIC EVOLUTIONS."



David, supervises the agriculture and resilience projects implemented in Virunga National Park. He supports and assists women's collectives in improving their yields and coping with climatic disasters, such as heavy rains or severe drought. David introduces women farmers to new agricultural production techniques to help them adapt to climate change, which causes soil erosion and a decrease in production yields. He explains how to use new and improved seeds, and trains them in climate-smart agroforestry and anti-erosion approaches.

"Education is essential to face these climatic evolutions," he said. "The young generations will see that together and with all that they have learned, there will be decent socio-economic development for all the population of the DRC."



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
- CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS
- SCOLARIZATION

MINING





According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), mining and quarrying is hazardous work for children in all respects. Mines and quarries are physically hazardous due to hard work, unstable underground structures, heavy tools and equipment, dust and toxic chemicals, and exposure to extremes of heat and cold. The ILO has noted, based on the findings of several surveys and research studies, **that mining is by far the most dangerous sector for children in terms of fatal injuries.**

The health problems associated with mining and chemical exposure are significant. A cross-sectional study in an artisanal mine measured levels of 17 different metals and non-metals in 47 children under 14 years of age working or living in the mine. The study found significant exposure to different metals in child workers. Overall, the analysis of urine samples revealed much higher levels of the metals in child miners than in adults, despite their lower exposure. The ILO also noted that cobalt, which can damage the heart, thyroid and lungs, and can exacerbate occupational asthma, was found in 87% of children living near a mine site. Not only did the blood levels exceed occupational limits, but they were also the highest ever recorded in the general population.

They break stones to produce gravel or try to collect the remains of ores that are dumped with toxic materials. They work bare-handed, without any protection, to the detriment of their health," explains Bora, a UNICEF-trained Child Reporters supervisor in Lubumbashi. Bora met children as young as 12 years old who work on the banks of an acidic and toxic river in Kipushi, a mining town in Haut-Katanga province. Bora says "because of the hard work they do every day, and the conditions of nutrition and hygiene in general, their physical appearance does not correspond to their age. They no longer live as children, but rather as adults. They think and participate in the survival of their families."

Mining can cause serious environmental damage. **Open-pit mining operations cause particularly severe degradation of land and landscapes and can lead to severe soil erosion.** The use of chemicals and heavy metals on sites, without wastewater treatment facilities, pollutes waterways. An estimated **15 tonnes of mercury are used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in the DRC each year**, making it the second largest source of mercury emissions in Africa.¹³

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
-  CHILD LABOR
-  SCHOOLING



> Without any protection, these children are handling toxic water in hopes of finding gold in the mining town of Durba in Ituri.

CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS

FLOODING AND SOIL EROSION



The DRC is constantly faced with emergency situations caused by natural disasters (landslides, soil erosion and floods). These complex situations are often accompanied by large population movements, which increase the pressure on the ecosystem and foster new humanitarian crises. Some of the country's provinces are particularly affected by torrential rains that cause flooding, especially along the Ubangi River and the Congo River.

In 2019, more than 876,000 people were affected by floods nationwide and needed emergency humanitarian assistance.¹⁴ The floods increased the vulnerability of the population by limiting access to basic social services, quality education, and destroying food sources and family livelihoods. People's home areas are no longer inhabitable due to the destruction of their homes and limited access to basic services, including health centers and schools. In addition, water points and latrines are often damaged in flooded areas, limiting access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation. The floods also affect areas that are already vulnerable to epidemics (measles, cholera, malaria) and/or where food security is fragile.

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

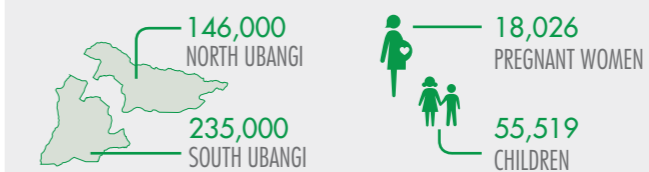
-  HYGIENE AND SANITATION
-  FOOD SECURITY
-  EPIDEMICS
-  SCHOOLING







MOSTLY AFFECTED PROVINCES



FLOODS IN FIGURES

In 2019, it is estimated that **more than 380,000 people** were affected by floods along the Ubangi River, including 235,000 people in South Ubangi and 146,000 people in North Ubangi, including 55,519 children and 18,026 pregnant women.



-  **31,902** HOUSES DESTROYED
-  **123** SCHOOLS FLOODED
-  **5,158** LATRINES BECAME INACCESSIBLE
-  **34,051** HECTARES OF AGRICULTURAL FIELDS FLOODED
-  **19** HEALTH CENTERS DESTROYED
-  **700** WATER POINTS FLOODED



FLOODS

Inaccessible schools



In October 2020, heavy rains and strong winds caused the Mutahyo River to burst its banks in Masisi territory. The overflow triggered major population movements between Sake, a village located 27 km from the city of Goma, (in the province of North Kivu) and the surrounding localities. Matters were made more difficult by the destruction of the Kihira bridge that linked the two areas. Three health zones were affected (Mitumbala, Kimoka and Kaduki) and several villages and agricultural areas were flooded. About 80% of the fields were partially or totally destroyed, depriving local people of their harvest and production capacity. Livestock and food stock were also washed away. More than a dozen people died while many others went missing.

The floods also caused long-term damage – about 550 households were left homeless and were provided with shelter by the local community. Stores, churches and schools were no longer functional. The Principal of Sake Primary School, Patient Kyahi, expressed concern that children would not have been able to start their school year properly: **“Our school is filled with mud up to one meter high,”** he said, **“due to erosion of the surrounding hills and soil. All our educational materials are gone.”**

Alfred, a coordinator for the Red Cross in the DRC, was present during this flood, and during

previous deluges. For him, climate change and poor management of agricultural areas are responsible for causing such disasters to the local population.

“The problem of flooding occurs frequently because of heavy rains,” he said, *“but the population does not expect it, because from year to year, the periods are variable and unknown. There are no palpable signs beforehand that there will be heavy rains that will cause damage. The climatic problem has become so grave that even the farmers do not know when to plant. We no longer know where we stand in relation to the climate. Climate change is often due to deforestation, but also to the population explosion. **When the population increases, so does the number of fields that need to be cultivated, meaning there is no longer any space reserved for trees that stabilize the climate.** Our Congolese children must inherit a culture which encourages them to plant trees, to practice reforestation and stabilise the climate. For this to happen farmers must leave their fields on fallow regularly to prevent erosion. People in the valley should not suffer the consequences of mudslides caused by too much cultivation on the hills.”*

Sitting on a pile of wood at the foot of a tree, a student looks out over his mud-filled schoolyard.

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

- FOOD SECURITY
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- POPULATION EXPLOSION



Patient Kyahi, principal of the Sake village elementary school, stands in the middle of his mud-filled classroom. All teaching materials and school equipment were lost in the floods.



Two young girls look at the debris of their school, part of which was destroyed in a storm. In Kalemie, this area near the lake is suffering from severe soil erosion.



SOIL EROSION

Schools in danger



Uncontrolled urbanisation, deforestation, heavy rains and rising water levels all contribute to landslides. But they also create land erosion which destroys houses, roads, water, electricity networks, health infrastructure, and schools, causing human fatalities. For example, the Ecole Primaire du Lac, located in the province of Tanganyika near the lake in the town of Kalemie, is experiencing rising water levels. The school was built in the 1970s and was certified as sanitary in 2010. **But the onset of numerous storms, increasingly severe, resulted in waves engulfing the five latrine blocks and destroying three classrooms.** Furthermore, the plot of land surrounding the school is also experiencing high rates of erosion which threaten the structure of remaining buildings. In the near future, it's highly likely that schoolchildren will not be able to study there any longer.

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED



CLIMATE CHANGE



SCHOOLING

School children play with the mud that invaded their school during a major flood in the village of Sake.



4 EPIDEMICS AND ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER

SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES



The increase in zoonotic epidemics is mainly due to environmental degradation that has profound consequences for animal and human interactions with their environment. Indeed, **the destruction of natural habitats, the decline of animal populations and the reduction of their genetic diversity increases infectious risks.** The intensification of animal husbandry practices coupled with the trade and consumption of wild animals, are also believed to be responsible for the emergence of new diseases and epidemics¹⁵. For example, in the DRC, the degradation of biodiversity has favored the emergence of zoonoses, such as Ebola virus disease or monkey pox¹⁶.

Cholera has been endemic in DRC since the 1970s. **The origin of any cholera outbreak is often an unsafe water source and poor sanitation.** In 2019, there were 31,000 cases of cholera, the vast majority of which occurred in the eastern provinces. Since January 1, 2020, the country has recorded 17,703 suspected cases and 297 deaths, with a case fatality rate of 1.4%. The Haut Katanga area in 2020, accounted for 41% of deaths nationwide, while South Kivu reported the highest provincial number of suspected cholera cases (5,786) since the beginning of 2020.

The fight against cholera and other waterborne diseases is linked to efforts to provide more people with access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

The DRC has over 50% of the African continent's

water reserves but despite this tremendous potential, 33 million people in rural areas still lack access to quality water. Despite sustained efforts, only 52% of the population has access to an improved water source and 29% has improved sanitation facilities.

At the same time, chronic malnutrition affects 43% of children between 0 and 5 years of age throughout the country. Malnutrition is a result of multiple causes, such as lack of access to safe drinking water, sanitation services and failure to practice basic hygiene practices. Generally, access to safe water and to adequate sanitary and hygienic conditions make it possible to prevent many other waterborne diseases. On the other hand, chronic conflicts in several provinces facilitate the spread of water-borne diseases due to large movements of population. The arrival of displaced people in host communities, with a low rate of access to drinking water, increases the pressure on available resources.¹⁷

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED



EPIDEMICS



HYGIENE AND SANITATION



SCHOOLING

THE HEALTHY SCHOOLS AND VILLAGES PROGRAM



The National Healthy Schools and Villages Program initiative¹⁸ is producing very positive results. Since 2008, this program has provided sustainable access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and appropriate hygiene to 10,000 villages and 2,600 schools, benefiting more than eight million people in total in the DRC.



10,000 VILLAGES



2,600 SCHOOLS



8 MILLIONS PEOPLE BENEFITED



ANGÈLE Director of Babudaa Primary School
 “I AM EAGER TO BANISH IGNORANCE ABOUT POOR HYGIENE PRACTICES AND ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.”





Angèle, Director of Babudaa Primary School has some interesting observations:

“I’ve already had about 40 years of service in education,” she said. “My greatest pride is to see that I am among those who take care of children and who have concern to develop the youth and our country. I am eager to banish ignorance about poor hygiene practices, and enhance knowledge and responsibility.”

“Our school is a sanitized school,” she continued, “that has given us the opportunity to deepen the learning that we give to the children in relation to health and environment. We learned a lot of things about the importance of hygiene. It is the life of the man who depends on it.”

We have taken decisions to improve hygiene and sanitation, which is not only learned at school. This does not stay in school with the children, we bring the things we have learned to our families and our neighborhoods to raise the standard of living for all of us.”

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  HYGIENE AND SANITATION
-  SCHOOLING



JULES Kinshasa state inspector of education
 “IMAGINE A CHILD WHO HAS NO WATER AT SCHOOL. AND THE CHILD IS THIRSTY.”





Jules, is a state inspector for primary, secondary and technical education and focal point for the Sanitized Schools Program: “The environment where the child lives must be sanitised and clean,” he says, “with latrines that must be sanitised and hygienic, and classrooms where child studies are

not unhygienic. The water that the child consumes cannot be just any water, it must be uncontaminated and clear drinking water, without microbes and odourless. If the child is exposed to an unhygienic environment, he will not be healthy. It goes without saying that he will be absent from school.”

“Here in Kinshasa,” he continued, “we know that water has become a scarce commodity – we even have systems of [water theft, known as] load shedding. We can have water, or we can run out. It can come back in two or three days. And yet, water is life. Water must be permanent. Imagine a child who has no water at school. And the child is thirsty. This affects us as adults. We know, that it is unbearable. Water must be in schools. What have we done about the difficulties in Kinshasa? We put water in the school with our drilling system, we bring water in the schools that are part of the Sanitation Schools Program. Our country has a lot of rivers, a lot of water, but unfortunately, we don’t know how to manage water it. We have difficulties in this area.”



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  HYGIENE AND SANITATION
-  SCHOOLING

WASTE MANAGEMENT

CHILDREN FIGHT AGAINST INSALUBRITY



In Kinshasa and globally, there is an urgent need to address inadequate waste management. Burying, burning or abandoning waste in the environment contaminates air, water and soil. One of the challenges is to provide basic waste management services in a rapidly growing city.

Kinshasa had a population of less than four million in 1990 but it is expected to reach 20 million by 2030¹⁹. Taking into account the increase in waste per capita, total solid waste generation in the city is now more than three times that of 1990 and will likely double again by 2030.


Today in Kinshasa, there are 7,000 tons of waste, including 1,500 tons of plastic, produced daily by 15 million people²⁰. The city does not have an adequate waste management system, which is why some rivers have been transformed into

garbage waterways, overrun by plastic waste. This remains the case even though in 2017 the DRC banned the production, import, marketing and use of plastic packaging. Plastic bottles however were not affected by the decree.



In the Congolese capital of Kinshasa, a woman walks on a mountain of waste, mainly comprising plastic bottles. Her neighborhood, and the river that runs through it, are deluged with garbage.

OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  COMMITMENT OF YOUNG GENERATIONS
-  ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
-  POPULATION EXPLOSION
-  EPIDEMICS
-  INSALUBRITY
-  SCHOOLING
-  CHILD LABOR



NEIGHBOURHOOD CLEANING

Waste management awareness



Dayan, 16, and Zahirine, 15, are part of a group of young people (between four and 18 years old) who mobilise to remove waste from their neighborhood in the commune of Mont

Ngafula in Kinshasa. Every Saturday morning, around 7:00 a.m., they meet to clean the streets of their neighborhood with shovels, brooms and wheelbarrows.

The older ones cut the grass with a machete; the younger ones clean the ground with small wooden brooms. They get involved in their community to clean up their environment





ZAHIRINE & DAYAN

15 and 16 years old



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

-  COMMITMENT OF YOUNG GENERATIONS
-  PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
-  EPIDEMICS



and educate their neighbours about waste management and to the pollution of the Congo River. Zahirine explains that the garbage dumped all over his neighborhood comes from "the negligence of the people, they do not want to work to have a healthy environment, and this dirt brings diseases like malaria or typhoid fever".

Dayan says that "cleanliness is necessary for everyone, we must think of ourselves, but also of others, we must not wait for the big people of this world to do things, we must weave our own fate. With our efforts, the children of this world will be able to grow properly. I would like us to support each other and be more tolerant for the world tomorrow."



RECYCLING FOR SURVIVAL BUT ALSO AS A CIVIC ACTRE

Waste recycling



Destin at 15 years old. Alongside his studies, he collects used plastic bottles to earn some money. For the last five years he wakes up between 04:00 and 05:00 to go looking for bottles in the streets of Goma. He collects them from garbage cans, trash heaps or directly in the street. For him, collecting the bottles is not just a means of subsistence, but also a civic act. "After collecting the bottles, I take

them to the lake and clean them. Then I go to sell them, often at the stadium or at the Kargasok (alcoholic juice) sellers. I collect these bottles to help meet my needs, such as buying shoes, clothes or getting my hair done. The environment is a place where humans, trees, animals and plants live, I don't like to see our environment dirty, I also collect these plastic bottles to help eliminate waste."



DESTIN 15 years old

"I DON'T LIKE TO SEE OUR ENVIRONMENT DIRTY; I ALSO COLLECT THESE PLASTIC BOTTLES TO HELP ELIMINATE WASTE."



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED



CHILD LABOR



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



MAKING ART THROUGH WASTE

The 'cardboard robot' who turns waste into art



Peggy is a young costume artist living in Kinshasa. At the age of 16, he focuses his artistic practice on recycling waste.

"I make my art with cardboard boxes," Peggy said. "Everywhere I go, I walk around with boxes. I recycle, I put pieces together to turn them into

robots. When I wear my costume on the street, everywhere I go, you can hear people calling me 'cardboard robot.' I recycle these cardboard boxes to show the people who neglect them, who throw them in the streets, and who turn our neighborhoods into garbage cans, that I'm not okay with that, it's bad for the environment."

For a few years, Peggy lived on the street. For him, the boxes he collects represents the fragility of childhood.

"I chose the material of cardboard, because I compare it to the child. When he is born, the child is fragile, if you hold him with brutality, he will cry, if you wash him [harshly], he will cry, it's the same thing with the cardboard, it can be damaged. The cardboard is for orphans and mothers who have abandoned their children in the street. Some mothers did not want to have these children and have abandoned them. Children also escape the control of their parents and end up sleeping in the street on cardboard."

Peggy mobilizes the youth in his neighborhood, encouraging adults to get involved in waste reprocessing.

"I have a message for the kids, like me, they should love studying," he said "Studying is good for the life of a boy and a girl; studies are the future. They must also protect the climate. I ask the



PEGGY 16, costume artist



"I RECYCLE THESE CARDBOARD BOXES TO SHOW THE PEOPLE WHO THROW THEM IN THE STREETS, AND WHO TURN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS INTO GARBAGE CANS, THAT I'M NOT OKAY WITH THAT."

children to avoid throwing boxes in the streets and creating dirt, it is not good. We artists fight against waste and unsanitary neighborhoods, but I also ask adults, and especially the President of the Republic, to fight against people who throw their garbage in the streets."

"The governors and mayors of the cities must get involved so that we can be healthy, so that we can breathe, so that we can live properly. Our country must move forward. Because they say that where there is dirt, there are witches."

Peggy works with passion; he is proud of his commitment: *"My dream is to improve my art so that people will support me even more. I want to make works to defend my country, because I am Congolese, and if I don't defend my country, no one else will. I work a lot, because I really need my future, the future of my brothers and my children, to be better. When I have a little more money, it will be available for my family, but also for the orphans who live on the street."*



OTHER THEMES DISCUSSED

 COMMITMENT OF THE YOUNG GENERATIONS

 PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

 INSALUBRITY

 SCHOOLING



CONCLUSION

Young people must be placed at the forefront of efforts to find effective and sustainable solutions to the climate crisis in the DRC. They must be truly empowered to take action against climate change and environmental degradation. Their voices must be heard, their actions and initiatives supported. Whether in the fields of education and awareness, technology or law, young people from all walks of life must be given the resources to continue mobilising their skills to take a stand against climate change. As stated in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, every person under the age of 18 has the right to participate in decisions that affect them.

As Ketsia, 16 years old, a UNICEF trained Child Reporter, explains:

“We are the Congolese youth and we are committed to defending children’s rights for a more equal, fair and sustainable world. We have rights and we intend to defend them! We want all generations to come together to reimagine the world of tomorrow, we must act together for the good of all.”



Notes

- 1 <https://www.unicef.org/environmentandclimate-change>
- 2 Monkey Pox: <https://cd.usembassy.gov/fr/embassy-fr/kinshasa-fr/sections-offices-fr/zoonotic-monkey-pox-fr/>
- 3 2020 projection based on the 3.3% population growth rate established in the 2017. Annuaire des statistiques 2017 publié par l'Institut national de la statistique (INS) in DRC.
- 4 <https://www.wwf.de/fileadmin/fm-wwf/Publikationen-PDF/Carbon-Map-of-DRC.pdf>
- 5 OCHA: Overview of Humanitarian Needs 2020
- 6 Map from the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (2015-2020) of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development in DRC, september 2015.
- 7 On International Children's Day, 20/11/2020, children were able to speak out, defend their rights, and present their documentary at an event in Kinshasa attended by Ms. Béatrice Lomeya Atilite, Minister of Gender, Family, and Children, Dr. Jeanne Ilunga Zaina, Vice-Minister of Environment, Mr. Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF Representative in the DRC, and Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO).
- 8 The International Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates in article 44 of the law on the Protection of the Child that "the child has the right to a healthy environment conducive to his or her full development.
- 9 UNDP: Climate change adaptation - <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/explore/middle-africa/democratic-republic-congo-13/03/2019>
- 10 WHO: 2016. Burning Opportunity: Clean Household Energy for Health, Sustainable Development, and Wellbeing of Women and Children.
- 11 <https://www.unicef.org/drcongo/media/3646/file/COD-MICS-Palu-2018.pdf>
- 12 World Bank
- 13 UNEP/UNITAR Development of Minamata Initial Assessment and National Action Plan for Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) GEF Programme document
- 14 UNICEF/WASH Cluster/Provincial Health Divisions
- 15 <https://www.cirad.fr/actualites/toutes-les-actualites/communiqués-de-presse/2020/origines-epidemie-coronavirus>
- 16 Monkey Pox: <https://cd.usembassy.gov/fr/embassy-fr/kinshasa-fr/sections-offices-fr/zoonotic-monkey-pox-fr/>
- 17 <https://www.unicef.org/drcongo/ce-que-nous-faisons/eau-hygi%C3%A8ne-et-assainissement>
- 18 PNEVA: program implemented by the government of DRC with support from UNICEF
- 19 Publication: Climate Landscape Analysis for Children – DRC, 2019
- 20 Régie d'assainissement et des travaux publics de Kinshasa – RATPK



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