



Learn, Live, Lead,

Security Council

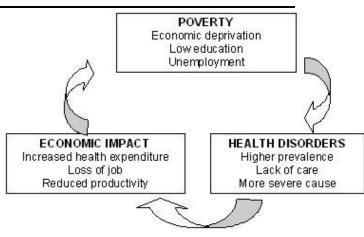
Description of Committee

The goal of the United Nations Security Council is to maintain international peace and justice. Countries bring complaints to the Security Council, which has the ability to take a variety of actions. First and foremost the Council recommends the parties involved resolve their disagreement or conflict using peaceful methods. The Council uses mediation, negotiation, conducts investigations or appoints special representatives to observe a situation. When conflict becomes violent, the Council can order a cease-fire, deploy a Peacekeeping force, or in most serious situations decide on military action, enact trade embargos, or institute economic sanctions against violating countries. Those countries that the Council must take action against may lose various rights and privileges it has a United Nations member state. If a conflict or disagreement between two or more countries is being discussed by the Security Council or General Assembly, then those countries, whether they are a member state or not, are invited to take part in the discussion but are not allowed to cast a vote.

The Security Council is composed of fifteen members. Five of these are permanent members of the Council and have **veto power**—the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, and China—as they helped found the United Nations as the major powers after World War II. The ten rotating members are elected by the General Assembly every two years by region. The rotating members for the year of 2013 are Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, and Togo. The memberships of Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, the Republic of Korea, and Rwanda to the Security Council will extend through the year 2014.²

Topic: Poverty and Health in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The complex relationship between poverty and poor health demonstrates a cruel, two-way cycle. Elements of poverty such as malnutrition, poor working and living conditions, and the inability to access health care lead to the impairment of an individual's overall wellbeing, while aspects of ill health, such as disease and high stress, contribute





to the downfall of households as economic entities.³ Communities experiencing these harsh patterns are especially common in insecure areas, such as developing countries and/or countries experiencing conflict, due to those countries' incapability of focusing on the care and welfare of their people. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one of these such countries.

Ongoing Conflict

Much of the continuous cycle of poverty and ill health experienced by the people in the DRC stems from instability that has plagued the country since its independence from Belgium in the 1960s. Since then, the DRC has been ravaged by constant conflict and violence. Two destructive civil wars occurred in the country between 1996 and 2003, killing between 3.5 and 5.4 million people. Many factors contributed to the wars' complexity and devastation, including repercussions of **colonialism** and **autocracy** that the country experienced earlier in its history. Other complications included wars in its neighboring nations of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, and the military involvement of both a variety of armed rebel groups as well as troops from nine other states within the country at that time. The persisting conflict is mainly due to the absence of authority within the government, as several armed groups fight for power and control in the eastern region of the country, terrorizing local citizens and communities in the process. Insecurity and violence have fueled the dire situation in the DRC, causing it to especially worsen in recent years.

The United Nations currently deploys 22,016 uniformed personnel in the DRC.⁷ Troops are a part of the Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), which replaced the former MONUC operation in 2010 by the Security Council in order to emphasize a new phase in the country's situation. According to the United Nations:

"The new mission has been authorized to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate relating, among other things, to the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts."

This gives greater safety and security to not only the people of the DRC, but also to the organizations providing them with food, water, shelter, medicine, and other services, which translates into more citizens receiving health care. However, though this mission has made advancements in helping DRC victims and stabilizing the country, intense conflict and violence continues to exist in some areas, specifically in the eastern region. Because of this, in 2013 the United Nations authorized an "intervention brigade," by utilizing NATO troops or a coalition of regional forces. This unprecedented mandate calls for offensive military action to be used against rebel groups for the purpose of establishing peace within eastern DRC, and to provide greater protection for those who live there.

Current Situation

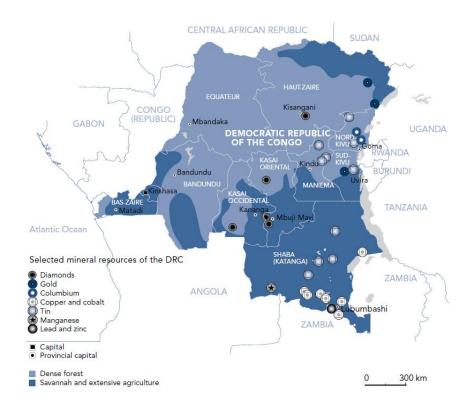
Being the second poorest country in the world, around 75% of the DRC population lives below the poverty line. ¹¹ Not only do the people suffer from killings, rape, abduction, forced recruitment, torture, and economic exploitation, but millions who fear for their lives flee from their homes and livelihoods, placing them in poor and unsanitary living conditions due to an especially recent escalation of bloodshed and instability. In addition, people in the DRC face



widespread disease and insufficient access to food, water, and other humanitarian aid, as well as the continued and growing threat of violence and theft.¹² It's these aspects of insecurity that

continue the downward spiral of extreme poverty and poor health afflicting the majority of the people in the DRC today.

The DRC is extremely wealthy in natural resources—from rough diamonds to copper and cobalt, to coltan, a material used to manufacture cell phones and other electronics, giving it great economic potential.¹³ However, none of these riches go towards improving the lives of the country's people or development. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the poverty level stands at 71.34%, and three out of every five people survive on less than US\$1.25 a day. Moreover, the conditions of infrastructure are neglected and in disrepair, roads



are destroyed, and railroads are no longer in use. It is estimated that the DRC requires \$5.3 billion each year for the next decade to rebuild the country's state of desolation and catch up to modern-day development.¹⁴

An immense number of the DRC's people are frequently faced with the dangers of dehydration and **malnutrition**. Clean water remains extremely scarce throughout the country; seven out of ten inhabitants of rural areas lack access to it, ¹⁵ and an alarming 50% of the DRC populace has no access to drinking water or basic health care. ¹⁶ Furthermore, with a population of over 57.5 million people in the DRC, an estimated 6.4 million of its citizens remain food insecure, and the **global acute malnutrition** rate for most of the country stands at or above the 10 percent threshold for intervention. ¹⁷ More specifically, a critical matter concerns child malnutrition. Nearly one out of every three children under the age of 5 is malnourished, ¹⁸ and an estimated 20% of children will not even make it to their fifth birthday. ¹⁹ According to the World Food Programme (WFP), experts believe that the main cause for these distressing conditions is the poverty that results from the intensifying violence between government and rebel forces, high food prices, and the global financial crisis that hit the DRC's vast mining industry. ²⁰

The outbreak of widespread disease is another major concern regarding the health of DRC citizens. For example, a **cholera** epidemic in the province of North Kivu affected 10,332 people by the year 2008, killing a total of 201 of these victims.²¹ Other food- and water- borne illnesses include shigella/dysentery, bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever. In addition, African trypanosomiasis (a sleeping sickness), plague, measles, respiratory infections,



and **malaria** are very common in the country, ²² as malaria remains the number one killer of DRC children. ²³ Though children are only about 19% of the DRC population, they make up 47% of the total deaths caused by malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, conflict, and malnutrition. ²⁴

Confronted with poverty, conflict, malnourishment, dehydration, and disease, most of those suffering have no choice but to turn to aid provided by foreign sources in order to survive. However, the aftermath of increasing hostilities in the DRC has exhausted its health systems, thus diminishing peoples' access to medical supplies and services. Meanwhile, remaining clinics are outdated and strained, suffering both financially from a lack of investments and physically due to direct attacks from the groups still involved in the conflict. Furthermore, more aid providers are pulling of the country due to violent conditions, and the number of thefts of existing stores of supplies remains very high. The poor infrastructure, lack of security, sanitation, food, water, and health care drives the ever-expanding need for humanitarian assistance, as aid organizations call for more than \$890 million in aid for the year of 2013. Without the supply of such facilities, equipment, and services, an enormous amount of people in the DRC would not be able to survive.

Foreign Aid

Providing humanitarian aid to the people of the Congo continues to be both an urgent and extremely challenging struggle for organizations trying to do so, due to the high instability and insecurity of the area. The World Health Organization (WHO) currently provides a large amount of technical support, while Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Epicentre and CEMUBAC, have formed a Health Cluster to deliver and distribute



medicine and supplies, and also to promote hygiene to prevent further outbreaks of disease. However, these centers remain strained and under high pressure from the severity of damage in the DRC and a constant stream of new arrivals. Those in an especially bad situation include internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. While the Health Cluster works to clean up the dirty and cramped sites occupied by IDPs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) leads a Protection Cluster and organizes assistance for them as well, centered around life-saving activities and basic needs for survival such as water, shelter, sanitation, and health care. In addition, the UNHCR reports to helping almost all of the returning refugees to the DRC through both community-based projects and targeted assistance to individuals in support of **repatriation**.

Another major concern is accurate evaluation of the crisis. The WHO has taken the responsibility of collecting statistics in order to quantify and analyze the situation, but has faced multiple difficulties because of conditions such as poor infrastructure, scattered communities, and a



highly stressful atmosphere. Nonetheless, strides toward better assessment of the DRC's situation have been made in recent years, such as the WHO partnership of the Health and Nutrition Tracking Services and the implementation of a new software system in the province of North Kivu to improve efforts of gathering information. WHO hopes that with greater knowledge of the situation in the DRC, they can identify major health problems in the area and further understand the scope of the tragedy occuring there.³⁰

The DR Congo receives a great amount of monetary aid through many sources. Some channels through which the aid is directed include: the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).³¹ In addition, the World Bank (WB), International Finance Corporation (IFC), and Multilateral Investment and Guarantee Agency (MIGA) established a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for the DRC, keeping in mind the instability and conflict within the area and working in part towards the reduction of poverty and a raise in human development.³² The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also published a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in July of 2013.³³ Multiple other UN agencies, NGOs, and governments currently provide economic assistance to the DRC, all of which for the year of 2013 are named on following the UNOCHA list: http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R10_E16280_asof___1308220100.pdf.

QUESTIONS/IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Poverty and ill health work hand-in-hand and must be considered as an on-going cycle when addressing the situation in the DRC. How could reducing one help to reduce the other?
- **2.** The DRC has great potential for a booming economy with its vast amount of natural resources. What is stopping the country from having financial success?
- **3.** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are for the most part in the worst situation in the DRC, as they have been cut off from their homes and livelihoods. What are issues that these people face?
- **4.** Continuous and violent conflict plays a significant role in the expansion of poverty and ill health in the DRC.



TERMS AND CONCEPTS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Veto Power: When voting on any important matters, the Security Council must have Great Power Unanimity, meaning all five of the permanent members must vote in support of the resolution. All it takes is one of the fine permanent members to disagree and "veto" the resolution for it to fail. (U.N. Security Council: Members)

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. (Oxford American Dictionary)

Autocracy: A system of government by one person with absolute power. (Oxford American Dictionary)

Infrastructure: The fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or area, such as transportation and communication systems, power plants, and schools; the basic, underlying framework or features of a system or organization.

Malnutrition: The lack of proper nutrition, caused by not having enough to eat, not eating enough of the right things, or being unable to use the food that one does eat. (Oxford American Dictionary)

Global Acute Malnutrition: A measurement of the nutritional status of a population that is often used in protracted refugee situations. It is one of the basic indicators for assessing the severity of a humanitarian crisis. In numbers, it is the sum of the prevalence of acute malnutrition rates at a population level. (Wikipedia, UNICEF)

Cholera: An infectious and often fatal bacterial disease of the small intestine, typically contracted from infected water supplies and causing severe vomiting and diarrhea. (Oxford American Dictionary)

Malaria: An intermittent and remittent fever caused by a protozoan parasite that invades the red blood cells. The parasite is transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical regions. (Oxford American Dictionary)

Repatriation: To send (someone, often a refugee) back to their own country. (Oxford American Dictionary)

Additional Resources

U.N. Security Council: Background and **U.N. Security Council: Members:** Different sections from the U.N. Security Council website. A great source for all kinds of information on the Security Council and its resolutions/workings.

CIA World Factbook: Congo, the Democratic Republic of the: Thorough information on the geography, the society, the government, transnational issues, and other topics pertaining to the DRC. Helpful for a general understanding of the country's international status.



BBC: Democratic Republic of Congo profile: Overview and BBC: Democratic Republic of Congo **profile: Timeline:** Accounts the history of conflict in the DRC. Though conflict is not a main idea within the topic, knowing background information about the violence and political situation in the country may help when considering possible solutions for the reduction of poverty and ill health.

Oxfam International: Conflict in D.R. Congo: Discusses the effects of conflict on civilian life in the DRC. Also gives insight on what the NGO is doing in the nation, thereby providing an example of a type of international action going on there today.

IMA World Health: Democratic Republic of Congo: Background information on the crisis in the DRC. Another example of foreign aid in the country.

World Health Organization: The Democratic Republic of the Congo: quantifying the crisis: Reports on the situation of citizens in the DRC, especially the IDPs. Discusses major concerns; i.e. the outbreaks of widespread disease, and WHO's efforts to collect data and analyze the crisis.

UNC School of Medicine: Center for Infectious Diseases: Democratic Republic of Congo: Details statistics of the situation of poor health in the DRC, and describes global health projects in operation there.

World Health Organization: Countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Provides a country profile of statistics on health, nutrition, mortality, disease, and health systems in the DRC.

The World Bank: Countries: Democratic Republic of Congo: Current events on the economic situation in the DRC. The Country Assistance Strategy (CAS; A link on the Overview page) explains the goals that the World Bank has set in place through its partnership with the IFC and MIGA to provide financial aid to the nation.

IMF: The Democratic Republic of the Congo: 2013 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: Access to the full text of the strategy (in PDF form) which outlines goals for the purpose of annihilating poverty in the DRC and providing a foundation for its transition to a peaceful and secure country.

2013 UNHCR country operations profile—Democratic Republic of the Congo: Examines the situations of IDPs and refugees in the DRC. Gives a context, list of needs, objectives and targets, includes possible solutions to improve their situation, as well as organization, implementation and financial information.

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