

Refugees Originating from the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Primary Languages: 200+ languages spoken by 200+ ethnic groups; most common languages are (Ki)Swahili, French, Kikongo, Lingala, and Tshiluba. It is common for Congolese to speak multiple languages.

Primary Religion: Majority Christian (Catholic and Protestant)

Major Holidays: January 1 New Year's Day, May 1 Labor Day, June 10 Reconciliation Day, August 15 Independence Day, November 1 All Saints Day, December 25 Christmas Day



Size comparison to U.S.A.

Historical Background

1200s - Rise of Kongo Empire

1870s - Belgian King Leopold II brutally begins to colonize Kongo for his own personal gain. King Leopold's regime killed 10-15 million Congolese; reign enforced through work camps, body mutilations, torture, and executions.

1908 - Congo Free State placed under Belgian rule following outrage over treatment of Congolese.

1960 - Independence, followed by civil war and temporary fragmentation of country.

1965 - Mobutu Sese Seko seizes power.

1997 - Rebels oust Mobutu. Laurent Kabila becomes president.

1997-2003 - Civil war, drawing in several neighboring countries – known as the “African World War”. Dozens of armed groups fight on in the east, requiring a large United Nations military force to try to maintain order.

2006 - First free elections in four decades. Second largest country on the African continent

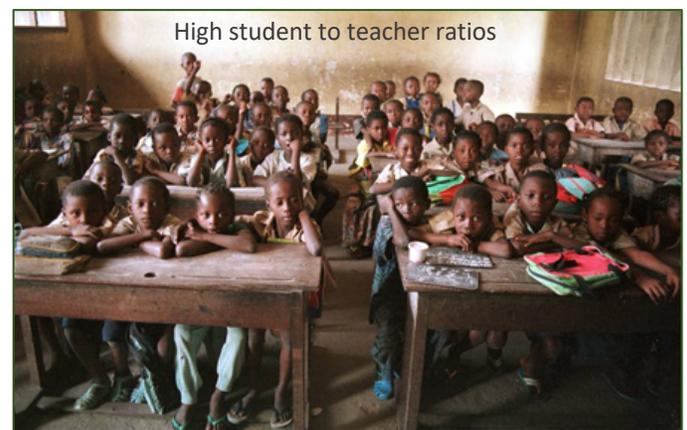


Refugees fleeing from conflict

- Formerly known as Zaire
- Often referred to by its acronym, the DRC, or called Congo (Kinshasa), with the capital added parenthetically, to distinguish it from the Republic of the Congo to the west, referred to as Congo (Brazzaville).
- DRC is rich in natural resources; vast deposits of diamonds, cobalt and copper (needed for electronics and cell phones); one of the world's largest forest reserves; and half of the hydroelectric potential of Africa.
- Refugees live scattered among Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia and Malawi.
- 73 percent of Congolese refugees under the age of 25 due to violence and lack of health services.
- Many refugees suffer from a high degree of trauma from exposure to violence, torture and sexual assault.
- 4.5+ million displaced people; 1 million+ newly displaced since 2017.

Academic Considerations

5.2 million+ children in the country did not receive any education during the civil war. Despite government initiatives making primary education free in 2010, access as well as attendance remains poor. Currently, 25 percent of the primary school-aged children and 60 percent of adolescents are not enrolled in classes. Severe shortage of teachers in public schools are another concern. The national average for primary schools is one teacher for 37 pupils; however, marginalized or rural areas endure much worse ratios. On average, educational programs in marginalized areas consist of one teacher to 100 pupils per class. In state schools, the teachers' salaries are often unpaid, forcing many to bribe students for a high test score. Some male teachers solicit sexual acts from female students, offering a good grade or money in exchange. The adult literacy rate is approximately 80% for males, 60% for females.



High student to teacher ratios

Naming Standards

During Mobutu Sese Seko's authoritarian rule Congolese citizens were ordered to abandon their Christian or foreign names and replace them with the traditional Congolese names. Following the end of Mobutu's rule many Congolese either reverted back to the previous names or retained both. Typically, the present structure of Congolese naming sequence includes the first name (usually Christian) followed by two traditional names.

- Pronounce each and every vowel (ex: Joan = Jo-ahn)
- Some names have French pronunciations (ex: Benoit = Ben-wah)
- Sometimes first and last names are reversed on official documents; ask students which they prefer to use in the classroom

Vowels are pronounced:

A = Ah (as in 'awesome')

E = Eh (as in 'egg')

I = Ee (as in 'ski')

O = Oh (as in 'only')

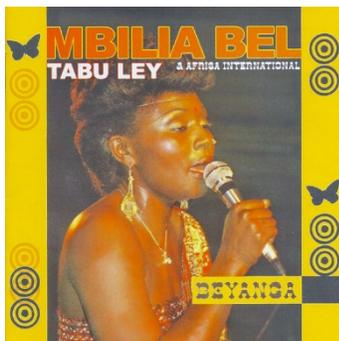
U = Oo (as in 'tulip')

Culture



- Congolese are very elegant people; the unwritten rule is that the nicer one looks, the more respect one will receive. Most Congolese dress in clean, crisp clothes and colorful outfits.
- Greetings are very important; saying hello ('*Bonjour*' [French] or '*Habari*' [Kiswahili]) and inquiring about the other person's family should be attended to before other matters are discussed. Using both hands to shake to shows respect.
- Objects should be passed with both hands or the right hand, never the left.
- Congolese often touch one another and talk quite frankly.
- From the time babies are able to walk, they are given responsibilities. Girls, especially, are expected to do lots of work for the family.

- Some Congolese mix indigenous practices with Christianity. People may go to a spiritual healer to remedy an illness, to ask for good crops, to become pregnant, or to be told the future. During certain rituals inside the healer's home, specific rules must be followed, depending on the consultation. Often the patient is told to come back for his or her solution in the morning, so the healer can wait for ideas to arise through dreams and communications with ancestors.
- Many believe that the spirits of people who have died remain with the family. Ancestors remain active in the life of the family for generations. People communicate with their ancestors, who act as intermediaries between humans and God. People often ask their ancestors for rain, health, good crops, or the solution to a difficult problem.
- DRC is equatorial; having essentially the same hours of daylight year round means "clock time" is able to remain a constant. The first hour of the day is "1:00" (sunrise), and so on. This can cause confusion when converting to the American system.



Popular Musician – look her up!



Fufu – a diet staple



Child labor is an issue in the mining industry



DRC is the most biologically diverse country in Africa and one of the most important centers of biodiversity in the world, encompassing over half of Africa's tropical forest. It is home to over 15,000 plant and animal species.

