

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) - 2009 Country Profile Shows Declining Immigration, Predominance of Lower Skilled, Intra-African Migration -

IOM has just released the 2009 Country Profile for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire). With a population estimated at nearly 68 million inhabitants, concentrated along the periphery of the country and with 10,292 km of common border with nine neighbouring countries, sound migration and border management practices are critical issues for the DRC, according to the report.

The DRC has rich natural resources, particularly mineral resources. These have however also been linked to a series of violent conflicts in recent years, maintaining an extremely high level of poverty, and effectively thwarting Millennium Development Goals. The continued presence of foreign armed groups, such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from Uganda and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) has also added to the insecurity in the country. In 2007, the DRC was ranked 176th out of 182 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (UNDP Human Development Report 2009). According to the same source, in 2000-2007, 59.2% of the population was living on less than \$1.25 USD per day. According to official figures for 2004-2005, the unemployment rate in the DRC was 3.7%, but it can be assumed that the actual number is much higher given the absence of state systems and supports effectively tracking unemployment rates.

More recently, and likely as a result of the armed violence that the country has experienced, the profile notes a steady decrease in the number of immigrants over the previous two decades - from a range of origin countries including the Russian Federation, Mexico, India and Ukraine - dropping to a rate of negative 22.7% between 1995 and 2000. According to the report, the number of immigrants in the DRC has declined from just over 1 million in 1960, to 754,000 in 1990, to 480,000 in 2005, to an estimated 445,000 in 2010. Valid figures are not available on migrant workers in particular, partly due to the predominance of the informal economy in the DRC. Data are also lacking on irregular immigrants, however given neighbouring country ethnic links to nationals of the DRC, irregular migration is assumed to be a significant phenomenon in the country.

Given the situation in the country and the condition of state structures, it is extremely difficult to obtain reliable data however evidence suggests that DRC continues to be a destination country for immigrants in spite of recent declines. Immigration is seen to be very diverse in nature, with refugees and asylum-seekers - products of the numerous and violent conflicts in the Great Lakes Region - constituting an important subset of the population in the country. Additionally, the country's large mine operations attract migrant workers from Africa and beyond and there is considerable migration for commercial activities from other African countries and the rest of the world, but these movements are not well studied. Transit migration towards South Africa and Europe also plays a role.

Sharing borders with nine other countries, the DRC regularly receives refugees fleeing conflict in their own country; this has been the case in recent years for Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Angola, the Congo and the Central African Republic. However according to

UNHCR figures, the number of refugees in the DRC strongly decreased between 2001 and 2008, from 360,000 to 155,000, as a result of diminishing conflicts in the region. Angola remains the main country of origin for refugees in the DRC, with over 111,000 refugees remaining in 2008. The DRC no longer appears to be a privileged destination for asylum-seekers and their numbers have been dropping regularly since 2003.

Migration trends shifted dramatically in the mid 1990's following the overthrow of the Mobutu Regime; the net migration rate in the DRC for the period 1990-1995 was 5.9 (per 1,000 persons) versus an average rate of -5.8 for the period 1995-2000. The net migration rate then stabilized at -0.9 from 2000-2005, and is projected to be -0.3 for the period 2005-2010.

The economic climate, conflicts and bad governance, generating strong internal and international mobility, are the main factors in migratory tendencies observed in the DRC since 2000. The 2009 profile highlights urban and rural populations on the move in search of better living conditions and the big cities of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi as points of convergence for a considerable rural exodus. Mining resources have also attracted the population to certain regions of the country, in addition to displacement driven by war and conflicts.

Traditional destinations for DRC nationals have included Belgium and France, however the report notes the increasing diversity of destination countries in Europe and beyond.

Figures on the number of Congolese nationals abroad vary greatly depending on the source, from 3 to 6 million. This discrepancy is due to a lack of official, reliable data. Emigrants from the DRC are above all long-term emigrants, the majority of which live within Africa and to a lesser extent in Europe; 79.7% and 15.3% respectively, according to estimates from the Development Research Centre at the University of Sussex based on 2000 Census Round Data.

Most Congolese emigrants however, remain in Africa, with new destination countries including South Africa and various points en route to Europe. In addition to being a host country, the DRC has also produced a considerable number of refugees and asylum-seekers located in the region and beyond. These numbers peaked in 2004 when, according to UNHCR, there were more than 460,000 refugees from the DRC; in 2008, Congolese refugees numbered 367,995 in total, 68% of which were living in other African countries.

The profile shows that the gross enrolment rate in primary education steadily declined in the DRC from 92% in 1972 to 64% in 2002, with the quality of education deteriorating as well, particularly in rural areas. According to UNESCO, 3,402 students or 2% of all Congolese persons engaged in higher education were studying abroad in 2007, down from 4,624 in 2000.

Data from 2000 indicates that 14% of the DRC population with a higher education level emigrated, however this group represented only 11% of the total migrant population.

Emigration from the DRC can thus be characterized as predominantly low skilled.

Official figures concerning Congolese nationals identified as being in an irregular situation abroad are not available, with data found only selectively for some countries. However, data from EU member states show that in 2007, 659 irregular migrants from the DRC were arrested in the 27 countries of the European Union, and 299 were expelled. While comprehensive information is not available on return migration to the DRC, the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return Programme (AVRR) in Kinshasa reported assisting approximately 700 persons between 2004 and 2009; the IOM AVRR programme is the only one of its kind for the DRC.

Regarding migration and development initiatives, the report notes that the DRC is a member of several regional and sub regional cooperation groups, which promote the free movement of persons within particular regions or areas, and that the country has also signed cooperation agreements on migration with European countries such as Switzerland and Belgium, to identify migrants and build the capacities of relevant institutions. The DRC also created a vice-ministerial post, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2006 for Congolese nationals abroad in the development of the country and to advocate for the Congolese Diaspora. The IOM led Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme also seeks to build capacity in the country to benefit from the competences of its expatriate nationals. However engagement with this important segment is limited and empirical data on the Congolese Diaspora is lacking.

It is difficult to give figures concerning the amount of remittances sent to the DRC by emigrants. The literature on this subject mostly contains qualitative analyses, not quantitative information. Even international sources such as the World Bank and UNCTAD are not in a position to present data on the remittances sent home by the Congolese Diaspora. However, various documentary sources and studies indicate that many families in the DRC (up to 80% in large cities) depend on remittances, and that most of these money transfers are made through informal channels. Most of the funds remitted are used to cover the immediate needs of the beneficiaries, with investments in community development or the economy being few and far between. The direct transfer of material goods, for example cars and various goods used for economic activities in the informal sector, also plays an important role. However, due to a lack and/or shortage of studies and reliable data on these issues and the predominance of the informal economy, it is difficult to estimate the overall impact of remittances on the country's economy.

Since independence in 1960 until the period 2000-2005, the DRC has lacked a clear migration policy and the legal framework on this issue is incomplete and lacks clarity. The report notes the existence of government institutions for the management and implementation of migration related issues, however political coordination on policy issues remains a major challenge. Positive developments include reference to migration in the country's Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy Document (DSCR) which also includes plans to establish a national programme on migration.

The lack of reliable data is a key challenge to producing comprehensive reporting on

migration issues in the DRC and statistical data is drawn largely from the World Bank and the United Nations. However, given the lack of national information, even these international sources have important gaps in some crucial areas the profile notes.

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For more information contact Frank Laczko IOM Geneva, Tel: +41 22 717 94 16, E-mail: flaczko@iom.int, Rudolph Anich, Tel: 41 22 717 9366, E-mail: ranich@iom.int