



Migration Profile

CONGO BRAZZAVILLE

A. Executive Summary

The Republic of the Congo is commonly referred to as Congo Brazzaville, to distinguish it from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country has one of the highest urbanisation rates (3.3% per year), with more than 50% of its population living in the two largest cities: Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. The country is one of Africa's largest petroleum producers, with the oil sector accounting for more than half of the GDP and more than 80% of the country's exportⁱ. Due to the decline in oil production and world prices, the economy of the Republic of the Congo continues to experience a recession. The joint effect of Covid-19 and the fall in oil prices affected the economy adversely, as it experienced a contraction of 6.8% in 2020ⁱⁱ.

Despite the oil wealth, approximately 47% of the country's population lives under the poverty line, and its unemployment rate is more than 50%ⁱⁱⁱ. The country has a large youth population, with 56% being under 20 years old, and a youth unemployment rate of 26.5% (20-24)^{iv}. The Republic of the Congo has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.574, and it is ranked at 149 out of 189 countries^v. It is an origin and destination country for refugees. In 2021, UNHCR continued the process of voluntarily repatriating Central African Refugees from the Republic of the Congo.

The Congolese country continues to face massive development challenges, including infrastructural development and diversifying the economy that is heavily dependent on oil production and natural gases.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

The Republic of the Congo was a former French territory known as Middle Congo. It is bordered to the northwest by Cameroon, to the north by the Central African Republic, to the east and south by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the southwest by the Angolan enclave of Cabinda, and to the west by Gabon. Brazzaville is the country's capital and largest city.

It has a total surface area of 342,000 sq. km and a population of over 5 million people^{vi}. Its ethnic composition is as follows: Kongo 40.5%, Teke 16.9%, Mbochi 13.1%, foreigner 8.2%,

Sangha 5.6%, Mbere/Mbeti/Kele 4.4%, Punu 4.3%, Pygmy 1.6%, Oubanguiens 1.6%, Duma 1.5%, Makaa 1.3%, other and unspecified 1%^{vii}. French is the country's official language, and Lingala and Monokuturba are also used as trade languages. It has many local languages and dialects, of which Kikongo is the most widespread. Its religious composition is as follows: Roman Catholic (33.1%), Awakening Churches/Christian Revival (22.3%), Protestant (19.9%), Salutiste (2.2%), Muslim (1.6%), Kimbanguiste (1.5%), other (8.1%), and none (11.3%)^{viii}.

II. International and Internal Migrants

The Republic of the Congo is one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with a growth rate of 3.3% per year^{ix}. Its two largest cities, Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, host more than half of the country's population.

The key driver of rural-urban migration is the search for employment opportunities in urban areas. Brazzaville has a population of 1.6 million, and Pointe-Noire is close to a million^x. Due to the high growth rate of informal settlements in the cities that host the ever-growing numbers of city dwellers (almost half of them live in slums^{xi}), access to social services which is substandard in the country is worse in the cities, because of the unplanned nature of the informal settlements. For example, an estimated 55% of households in the country have access to electricity, but, in Brazzaville, the number of households that have electric power is much lower (22%), while in Pointe-Noire is 37%^{xii}.

In 2019, the international migration stock for the Republic of the Congo was 402,900 (7.5% of the population)^{xiii}. 45.2% of them were female, and the majority of international migrants (68.1%) were between the age of 20 and 64^{xiv}. The top five countries of origin were the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Mali, the Central African Republic, and Rwanda^{xv}.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

The Republic of the Congo has 139,397 emigrants, representing 5.24% of the population^{xvi}. Male emigrants were 120,941 (50.51% of the whole emigrant population), and female ones were 118,456 (49.48%)^{xvii}. The top five destination countries are France (76,499), South Africa (34,445), Tanzania (22,434), Gabon (16,194), and Mali (11,849)^{xviii}.

Brain drain is an indicator of the economic impact of displacement and the consequences thereof on the development of a country. There are no recent statistics regarding the number and location of skilled migrants from the Republic of the Congo. However, the government is experiencing shortages especially in the health and education sectors. For example, in the health sector, the country has 0.28 physicians, and 1.91 nurses and midwives per 10,000 population^{xix}. Despite the fact that the Republic of the Congo does not have a diaspora engagement policy, there are organisations, for example, Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA), aiming to strengthen the capacity of the government to mobilise the Congolese diaspora skills in the health and education sector^{xx}.

The Republic of the Congo obtained 7.1 index points in 2020, which is above the world average of 5.25 index points based on 173 countries^{xxi}, thus increasing people's displacement within the country.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees, climate displaced people)

As of September 2021, the Republic of the Congo hosted 52,631 refugees and asylum seekers^{xxii}. The country does not have an encampment policy for refugees. As a result, refugees and asylum seekers lived both in urban and rural areas. They came predominantly from three countries: the Central African Republic (28,428), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (23,683), and Rwanda (10,249). 462 refugees and asylum seekers arrived from other countries^{xxiii}. The main factor of the displacement of Central African and Congolese refugees is the political instability in their home country. Even though the cessation clause for Rwanda reached its deadline in December 2017, and the relative peace still prevails in that country, there are thousands of Rwandan refugees who refuse to voluntarily go back home^{xxiv}.

Due to the porous borders that separate most African countries, similar to the border between the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic, it becomes possible for some migrants to be smuggled or to come irregularly into the Republic of the Congo from the DRC and CAR, on foot or by bus. The prevailing economic crisis in the Republic of the Congo is scapegoating refugees and asylum seekers, who are seen as a security threat and consequently targets for police harassment, ransoming, arbitrary arrest, and detention^{xxv}. Most refugees and asylum seekers have lost their livelihood activities and are living in dire conditions.

As of September 2021, there were 304,430 internally displaced people in the Republic of the Congo^{xxvi}. The drivers of internal displacement are both conflict/violence and natural disaster related. For example, conflict and violence led to the internal displacement of 107,000 people in the Pool department^{xxvii}. According to IDMC, in 2019 a mudslide in Ngambio La Base displaced 3,000 people, and flooding displaced about 163,000 people in 4 other departments (Likou, Cuvette, Plateaux, and Sangha)^{xxviii}, prompting the government to declare a state of humanitarian emergency in the affected areas^{xxix}.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

The Republic of the Congo is a Tier 2 country and does not entirely meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, despite its efforts to do so.

Congo is a source and destination country for victims of human trafficking, especially women and children. Though the government did not report any case of human trafficking in 2020, in the previous year the government disclosed 9 victims of human trafficking and prosecuted 6 traffickers; and in partnership with law enforcement officers, in 2020 an NGO conducted 24 trafficking investigations and identified 12 potential victims^{xxx}.

The government provides shelter and psychological services in government-run centres, where victims have access to water, food, clothes, education, security, and psycho-social counselling^{xxxi}. The government funded three public shelters accessible to victims of human trafficking.

Victims of human trafficking usually come from the rural parts of the Republic of the Congo, Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Cameroon. Most of them are children, men, and women. Victims are exploited in urban areas in domestic services, forced labour in the agricultural sector, market vending, and sex trafficking. There are reports indicating that servitude involving some Congolese is hereditary^{xxxiii}. NGO and international organisations assist with the identification, referral, assistance, investigation, and negotiation of compensation for the majority of victims.

VI. National Legal Framework

The most important piece of legislation governing immigration and emigration in the Republic of the Congo is Act No 29-2017 of 2017, amending and supplementing Act No 23-96 of 1996, regulating the legal regime of exit, entry, and residence of foreign citizens in the Republic of the Congo. This law is also used as part of the framework regulating asylum and refugee related matters in the country. There is also Law No 35-1961 on the Congolese Nationality Code.

The Republic of the Congo is a signatory to several migration-related international conventions. For example, the country signed and ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 AU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugees Problems in Africa. It also ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa - the Kampala Convention.

The Republic of the Congo is a member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) which seeks to facilitate the free movement of nationals of member states, and a signatory to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Members of Their Families and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The Republic of the Congo also ratified several international human rights treaties, which include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and other cruel inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The key migration-related Ministries in the Republic of the Congo are the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, responsible for emigration/immigration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Congolese Abroad, handling relations with the diaspora and the management of the National Committee for Assistance to Refugees (NCAR), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action, managing NCAR and the fight against trafficking in

human beings, and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Promotion of Indigenous People, also responsible for NCAR^{xxxiii}. The National Committee for Assistance of Refugees handles the determination of refugee status and issuance of refugee cards.

Regarding human trafficking, the government enacted the 2019 Combating Trafficking in Persons Law that criminalised sex and labour trafficking and instituted the trafficking in person coordinating committee, which assigns child victims of human trafficking to foster homes and conducts family tracing.

International Organisations

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are the key international organisations dealing with migration-related issues in the Republic of the Congo. UNHCR and IOM, in partnership with other stakeholders, deliver multi-sector assistance to refugees. UNHCR ensures that asylum seekers can apply for and gain access to protection. UNHCR also makes sure that refugees have the right to asylum and can return voluntarily to their country of origin, integrate locally, or settle in a third country. For Example, in 2018, UNHCR embarked on assisting Central African Republic citizens who volunteered to return home with transportation and financial support to facilitate their integration process. IOM is also involved in several areas related to migration, including migration governance, return, and reintegration.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is offering food assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in the Republic of the Congo. Save the Children is providing quality education, improving maternal, neonatal, infant, and school children's health and nutrition. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) assists refugees along the Congo and Oubangui river corridor with critical water hygiene supplies.

NGOs and Other Organisation

The *Association Nationale des Gardien de la Paix* (ANGP) offers humanitarian assistance for refugees and protection of human rights. The organisation provides services in health, education, welfare, and employment. It also deals with cases of corruption, security, and judicial inequalities.

The *Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'homme* (OCDH) works in the areas of human rights education (advocating a culture of peace and democracy), defence, and the promotion of human rights, provides legal and medical assistance and also social protection for vulnerable groups. OCDH is also involved in the repatriation of Rwandan refugees and conducts surveys on the feelings of refugees about repatriation. The organisation has also urged UNHCR to provide a situational report on Rwanda to Rwandan refugees.

CEMIR (Commission d'Entraide pour les Migrants et les Réfugiés) is one of the implementing partners of UNHCR in Congo Brazzaville. CEMIR provides social, economic, and humanitarian services to refugees in Congo Brazzaville. Some of their projects include: developing income-generating activities that benefit urban migrants, assisting refugees to cover funeral expenses, assisting and supporting the voluntary repatriation process of

refugees (for example, DRC refugees who arrived in 2009), implementing school assistance programs in refugee sites. Hiring refugee teachers ensures continuity in the academic programme, as they are refugees from DRC whose academic programme is different from that in Congo Brazzaville.

The Catholic Church

Of the different religious congregations in the Republic of the Congo, the Roman Catholic Church has the highest following (33.1%). It has three archdioceses (Brazzaville, Owando, and Pointe-Noire) and six dioceses (Gamboma, Kinkala, Imfondo, Ouesso, Dolisie, and Nkayi). Through its humanitarian organisations, the Catholic Church makes a difference in the lives of so many people living in the Republic of the Congo, especially the most vulnerable.

Operating under the mandate of the Bishops' Conference of Congo via the Episcopal Commission for Charitable work, Caritas Congo takes part in the management of human and natural disasters^{xxxiv}. Caritas is involved in several projects, aimed at improving the livelihood of vulnerable people in the country. For example, the Ematelo project implemented by Caritas targeted the displaced and returnees, by providing household items to 12,500 internally displaced people and 5,000 returnees^{xxxv}.

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS), with financial support from the Global Fund, in partnership with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of the Congo, in the fight against malaria, provided 3,074,650 long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets to the entire Congolese population including the most vulnerable^{xxxvi}.

The Salesian Missions in its fight against youth unemployment in the Republic of the Congo operate three training centres. One of them is in Pointe-Noire that hosts a youth oratory, a vocational training centre, a primary and secondary school, a boarding school, and a shelter for young people in difficulty and pastoral care in prisons^{xxxvii}. The other two are in Brazzaville, providing courses in electrical, automotive mechanics, welding and lathing, carpentry, and air conditioning installation^{xxxviii}.

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D. Endnotes

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- ^{vi} CIA – World Factbook, 2021
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