



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO'S HEALTH SECTOR



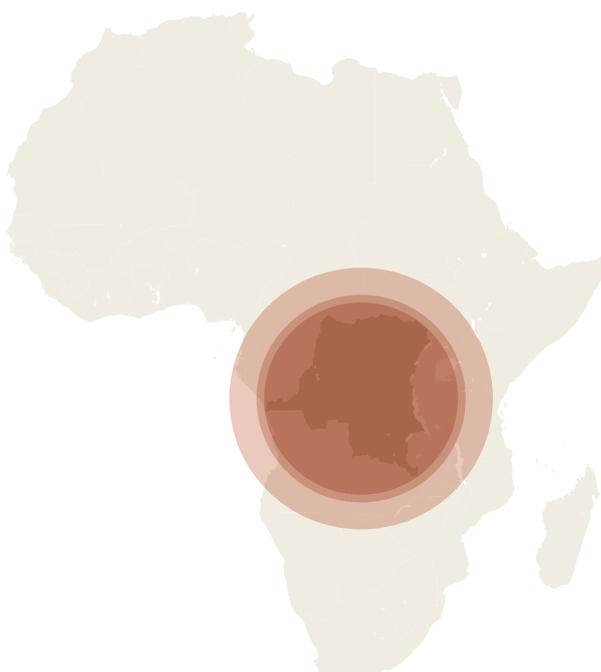
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1. Country Overview

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is in central sub-Saharan Africa and was formerly known as Zaire. In 1960, the country gained its independence from Belgium. The DRC is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa and the second largest on the continent, with an estimated area of 2,344,858 km²^[1]. The DRC has a population of over 91 million people, which is equivalent to 1.15 percent of the world's total population and is ranked 16 in the world in terms of population, and 45.6 percent of the people live in the urban areas^[2]. The DRC's capital city, Kinshasa, is the largest in central Africa. Over the years the country has been facing political and social instability, and the DRC remains one of the poorest countries in the world with 72 percent of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day^[3]. The country has more than 200 ethnic groups and the Bantu people constitute the majority of the country's population. Over 242 languages are spoken in the country with French as the official language, but others include *Lingala, Kikongo, Kituba, Swahili, and Tshiluba*.



The Congo River and its tributaries form the major part of the transportation system in the country. The rivers link the two main cities of Kinshasa and Kisangani. The DRC has about 58,000 km of national roads supplemented by 5033 Kilometers of inter-connected rails^[5].

The country has bilateral agreements with over 50 countries and has also ratified several international agreements including WTO, COMESA, SADC, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Nile Basin Initiative (NBI). The DRC has an economic freedom score of 49 making its economy the 165th freest in the 2021 Economic Index^[6].

1.1. Key Country Statistics



60 years

Life expectancy, 2018



4.4

GDP growth (annual percent), 2019



30.1% Exports of goods and services as a percent of GDP, 2019



33.1% Imports of goods and services as a percent of GDP, 2019

**Source: World Bank [7]*



Exported products 2019:
Refined Copper (**\$4.06B**),
Cobalt (**\$1.91B**), Copper
Ore (**\$544M**)



Imported products 2019:
Packaged Medicaments (**\$363M**),
Refined Petroleum (**\$287M**),
Sulfuric Acid (**\$180M**)^[8]



(**\$600M**)^[9]
Balance of
trade, 2019

2. COVID-19 Situation

As of 23rd September 2021,

- The total number of cases was 56,463, deaths were 1,068, and 30,858 recoveries.
- The first COVID-19 case was reported in the DRC on 10th March 2020.
- The daily number of new cases has been relatively high since May 2021. On 22nd September, the seven-day moving average of new COVID-19 cases was 20.
- The number of total active COVID-19 cases has also been increasing since May. The number of COVID-19 active cases was 24,537 on 22nd September 2021.
- The COVID-19 fatality rate has remained relatively low since January 2021.

Source: Worldometer

- The DRC started administering COVID-19 vaccines to its population in March 2021.
- As of 16th September 2021, most of the COVID-19 restrictions remained unchanged. This includes but is not limited to.
 - Night curfews, restaurants, bars, night clubs, churches, gatherings, and public transportation should not exceed a capacity of 50 percent
 - All persons must wear face masks in public.
 - A medical certificate confirming a negative PCR COVID-19 test result is required when traveling from one province to another.
 - All borders remain open.

3. Health Overview

Decades of violence and conflict deteriorated the health infrastructure in the DRC. The health sector is marred by inefficiencies, insufficient funding, poor infrastructure, limited accountability, and weak institutional capacity. Despite the government's effort to improve access to and quality healthcare, maternal mortality rates remain high (473/100000) and almost 50 percent of children under the age of five remain malnourished ^[12].

The health systems in the DRC are divided into four sectors; the public medical sector, the private medical sector (both for-profit and non-profit), the private pharmaceutical sector, and traditional medicine^[13]. The health sector is led and regulated by the Ministry of Health. The private sector plays a crucial role in the provision of healthcare services in the DRC, although the extent of its role is not clearly defined. According to Sustaining Health Outcomes through the Private Sector (SHOP Plus) DRC Private Sector Assessment report in 2018, 44 percent of outpatient care and 25 percent of inpatient care is provided by private facilities. Private facilities also have better infrastructure and operational capacity as compared to public facilities. There is still an increasing need to advance Public-Private Partnerships^[13].

The Ministry of Health is currently prioritizing the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2019 - 2022. The NDP 2019-2022 focuses on the delivery of a primary healthcare services package that emphasizes improvements in reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N). The plan prioritizes the use of innovative financing mechanisms, including strategic purchasing, direct-facility financing, and single-contract pooled funding^[14]. The DRC has also been in partnership with International Health Partnership (Now UHC2030) to ensure its population has access to health services without suffering financial hardship.

Being a low-income country, the DRC depends heavily on external aid and government. Recently the country has demonstrated progress in increasing domestic health financing. The country is on its track to achieving 10percent GDP allocation for health by 2022 ^[14].

The following are the sources of health expenditure in the DRC ^[15].

- Out of pocket spending, 41.61percent (2018)
- External Aid, 35.22percent (2018)
- Government transfers, 14.37percent (2018)
- Voluntary Health Insurance, 3.4percent (2018)
- Social Health Insurance Contributions, 0.71percent (2018)
- Others, 4.7percent, (2018)

Source: National Health Accounts, WHO 2018

The Ebola virus disease is still endemic in Biena, Katwa, Butembo, and Musienene health zones where 11 cases and 4 deaths were reported as of 4 March 2021^[16]. Communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional conditions cause 62 percent of the population proportional mortality. Non-communicable diseases account for 28percent of deaths^[17].

Top 10 causes of death in the DRC



Malaria



Lower respiratory infections



Neonatal disorders



Tuberculosis



Ischemic heart diseases



Diarrheal diseases



Stroke



Congenital defects



Road injuries



HIV/AIDS

***Source: Centre for Disease Control and Prevention**

3.1 Key health statistics



3.30

Current health expenditure (Percent of GDP), 2018

49.70

Domestic private health expenditure (Percent of CHE), 2018

15.08

Domestic general government health expenditure (Percent of CHE), 2018



41.61

Out-of-pocket expenditure (percent of CHE), 2018



27

Maternal mortality rate (473/100000), neonatal (per 1000 live births), 2019



85

Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), 2019

**Source: World Bank^[7]*

4. Challenges Facing the Private Health Sector

- The health system in the country is fragmented bringing about challenge collaboration and working together among the key health stakeholders.
- Ebola virus disease outbreak
- Country's instability because of a decade of political violence and conflicts
- Poor road infrastructure
- High poverty and harsh economic conditions as 72 percent of the population live below the national poverty line.

5. Opportunities in the Private Health Sector

- There is a need for the private sector to support the current MOH National Health Plan to improve reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N)
- Since government health spending is still low, private equities and funders can contribute to financing the health sector in the country.
- Malaria is still the number one cause of death in the DRC. Private programs need to be developed to supplement the already existing ones to help reduce deaths from Malaria, Ebola virus disease, and COVID-19.



Do you need more in-depth information on DRC's health sector and how your project or business can contribute?

AHB offers a wide range of tailor-made market, feasibility and strategy studies based on your needs. Our market intelligence services are designed to help you gain in-depth insight in a particular (sub) health sector, understand the opportunities and challenges for your project or business and provide you with recommendations that allow you to pursue the growth of your organisation in a particular (sub) sector or region.

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