

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Capital Kinshasa

Population 71.71 million

Literacy Rate 67.2 percent

Infant Mortality Rate 78.43/1,000 live births¹

Life Expectancy 48 years old²

Total Refugees 455,852

Total Asylum Seekers 31,126³

Refugees in South Africa 10,609⁴

Percent of People Living under Poverty Line 71.3 percent⁵

GDP per Capita \$181⁶

While the government and economy of the Democratic Republic of Congo is relatively stable, eastern Congo is entrenched in conflict; the government of the DRC has lost much of its legitimacy in specifically the North and South Kivu provinces in eastern Congo, where rebel groups have effectively established themselves as the ruling political entities.⁷

Stemming from the Rwandan genocide of 1994, in which 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed, the conflict is characterized by economic warfare of several armed groups, including the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and some of the world's most egregious human rights abuses. These rebel groups are funded by millions of dollars worth of valuable natural minerals⁸, including wolframite (tungsten), cassiterite (tin), coltan (tantalum and columbium) and gold, which are used primarily in electronic products such as computers, cell phones, game systems and mp3 players.⁹

The rebel groups are known to levy taxes on the villages they occupy¹⁰, construct roadblocks that effectively isolate and suffocate entire villages¹¹, enslave the local population to fetch firewood and drinking water, and to mine minerals¹², conscript child soldiers¹³ and launch attacks on villages in an effort to gain greater access to mines.¹⁴ Recent reports show that as many as 28 million children don't have access to education because of fear of attacks or sexual violence against students.¹⁵ In addition, the DRC is cited as the rape capital of the world, with as many as three-fourths of women have been raped.¹⁶ The conflict is compounded by the movement of the Lord's Resistance Army into eastern Congo. Since 1 January 2011, 35 have been killed, 104 have been abducted and as many as 17,000 have been displaced.¹⁷

¹ World Fact Book: Democratic Republic of Congo, CIA. 2011.

² World Development Indicators: Democratic Republic of Congo, World Bank. 2010.

³ 2010 Statistical Snapshot: Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2010. Data reflects total refugees and asylum seekers as of January 2010.

⁴ 2005 Statistical Yearbook: South Africa, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2007.

⁵ World Development Indicators: Democratic Republic of Congo, World Bank. 2010. Data is based off internationally recognized poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

⁶ 2009 Indicators on income and Economic Activity, United Nations Statistics Division. 2010.

⁷ Onesphore Sematumba, "The FDLR in North and South Kivu: A State within a State." in *Guerillas in the Mist: The Congolese Experience of the FDLR war in Eastern Congo and the Role of the International Community*, ed. Pole Institute (Goma, DRC: Pole Institute, 2008), 10.

⁸ The Enough Project, and Grassroots Reconciliation Group, "A Comprehensive Approach to Congo's Conflict Minerals," (2009), 16.

⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003*, (2010), paragraph 742.

¹⁰ Onesphore Sematumba, "The FDLR in North and South Kivu: A State within a State." in *Guerillas in the Mist: The Congolese Experience of the FDLR war in Eastern Congo and the Role of the International Community*, ed. Pole Institute (Goma, DRC: Pole Institute, 2008), 10.

¹¹ Ibid., Sematumba, "The FDLR in North and South Kivu: A State within a State," 11.

¹² Patrick Vinck, et al., "Living with Fear: A Population Based Survey on Attitudes About Peace, Justice, and Social Reconstruction in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo," eds. Human Rights Center of University of California at Berkeley, Payson Center for International Development, and International Center for Transitional Justice, (2008), 33.

¹³ Susanna Kim, "Weary from War: Child Soldiers in the Congo" *Harvard International Review* 27, no. 4 (2006), 7.

¹⁴ UNSC, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2010/512)*, 11.

¹⁵ "UNESCO: Conflict robs 28 Million Children of Education." BBC News. 1 March 2011. Web.

¹⁶ Nicholas Kristof, "The Weapon of Rape." Op-Ed. New York Times. 15 June 2008. Web.

¹⁷ Jonny Hogg, "Wanted Rebel Leader returns to eastern Congo" Reuters Africa. 29 March 2011. Web.