



UNHCR

GMUNC

Conference Information

GMUNC will be held in person on October 19th, 2024. It will be held at Hern M. Gunn High School, 780 Arastradero Rd, Palo Alto, California, 94306, USA. Please follow this [Campus Map](#) to get your committee room. In terms of position paper format please follow the standard GMUNC form:

- "Times New Roman font, 12 pt. size, double-spaced
- 1" margins on all sides
- Delegate Country/Individual, Committee Name, School Name, and the text "GMUNC IX" must be present in the header
- Please do not include the student's [your] actual name in the paper. Given the close proximity of attending schools as well as the presence of Gunn delegates, anonymity is paramount.
- An MLA reference list at the end of the position paper. The list should be alphabetized as per MLA custom and does not count toward the page limit
- Sent in standard PDF format.
- (For more information please go to [Position Papers](#) GMC website)

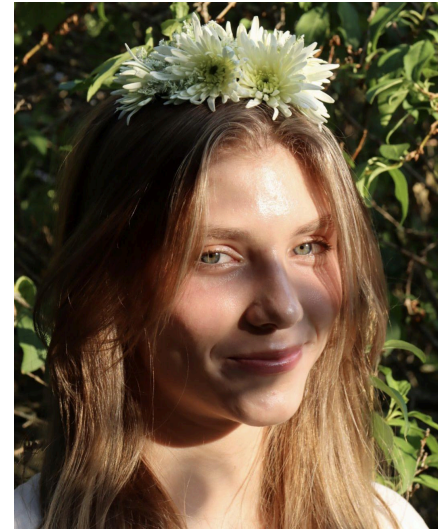
Please feel free to use this [Position Paper Template](#) to start your position paper journey and if you're looking for some more inspiration please view this [example position paper](#). Please submit your possession paper in PDF format to this email: gmunc.xi.unhcr@gmail.com by 11:59 pm on **October 12th** to be eligible for a research award, and 11:59 PM on **October 18th** for all other awards. We recommend 4-5 pages, maximum of 7 for your position paper (not including sources). When writing your position paper do **NOT** directly copy text from any resources, that is plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Detection of plagiarism or AI writing (such as ChatGBT) over 25% will result in being **disqualified for ANY awards**.

Thank you for attending GMUNC XI 2024, and if you have any questions please contact our email at: gmunc.xi.unhcr@gmail.com.

Bio Letters

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

My name is Alina Fleischmann, a current student at Gunn High School, and it is with great pleasure that I hold the role of your head chair for GMUNC XI. Beyond the confines of academia, my interests span various spheres, including painting, advocating for neurodiversity and mental health, running, indulging in reading (literary fiction to any book lovers), and cherishing moments with my beloved cats Mia, Max, and my horse, Honey.



My journey in Model United Nations spans a period of just a few years, however, I have already developed a profound passion for environmental conservation and human rights advocacy. I am deeply appreciative of the sense of community that MUN cultivates—a space where lasting friendships are forged and invaluable experiences are shared.

It is my sincerest hope that each of you has joined GMUNC XI with a shared commitment to learning, fostering relationships, indulging in diplomatic debate, and embracing the myriad experiences MUN offers. I am eagerly looking forward to meeting each one of you, and I extend my best wishes to all as you embark on your journey of position paper writing.

Warm regards,

Alina Fleischmann

Dear Delegates,

I'm Zahra Rohaninejad, a senior at Castilleja School, and I'm so excited to be your co-chair for GMUNC XI! I've thoroughly enjoyed being a GMUNC delegate for the past three years, and I can't wait to see what resolutions you will bring forth to our committee. I love MUN for the opportunity to delve into topics I never knew about and to make friends with people beyond my bubble. I know this may be some people's first conference, so I hope you obtain the important skills of exploring new perspectives and coming up with tangible solutions to world crises. None of these issues will be solved in our high school MUN committee, but these solutions are all baby steps.



Although I love basking in the joys of being a Model UN delegate (or chair, in this case), I love learning languages. When teachers give me the occasional space to breathe, I love to read, crochet, or play tennis (very badly). I also love visiting new cafes and restaurants with friends.

Model UN, especially position paper writing, can be daunting, but I offer you a new perspective of viewing this process as an opportunity to practice how to do high-quality research, which will be an invaluable skill throughout the rest of high school. I've made so many friends from Model UN, so I hope you not only apply yourself in your research and public speaking but also talk to new people. I can't wait to meet you all!

Best,
Zahra

Letter From Chairs

Dear Delegates,

We are thrilled to welcome you to GMUNC XI, where you will represent your country in addressing the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugee crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is an honor to serve as your committee chairs.

As indicated by our topic, this committee will address the crises of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees in the DRC. However, given the scale of displacement, our primary focus will be on the IDP situation. Since early 2024, approximately 7.1 million people in the DRC have been classified as IDPs,¹ compared to just over 500K individuals classified as refugees as of June 2023.² Therefore, while we will address the refugee situation in committee, the predominant emphasis will be on mitigating the IDP crisis, which constitutes the more significant challenge in the DRC.

GMUNC is a fantastic opportunity to hone your diplomatic skills and learn and work on parliamentary procedures. As a novice conference, we understand that this may be many people's first time in a specialized committee, so we encourage you to ask questions throughout the conference; our team is here to support you. Our goals are to foster respectful debate, reach consensus on complex issues, and deepen your understanding of international relations. We expect thorough research, respectful interaction, and effective collaboration. Most of all, **diplomacy** is key to your success in this forum.

Delve deeply into the refugee crisis, understand your country's policies and goals, and prepare your position paper carefully. Actively participate in sessions, keeping your country's objectives in mind, and **remember that as UNHRC members, your role is advisory.**

¹ "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees, February 2024 - Democratic Republic of the Congo | ReliefWeb." Reliefweb.int, 26 Mar. 2024, reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-internally-displaced-persons-and-returnees-february-2024#:~:text=Since%20the%20beginning%20of%202024.

² "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Refugee Policy Review Framework Country Summary as at 30 June 2023 (Update of the Summary as at 30 June 2023) - Democratic Republic of the Congo." ReliefWeb, 13 Mar. 2024, reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-refugee-policy-review-framework-country-summary-30-june-2023-update-summary-30-june-2023#:~:text=As%20of%2030%20June%202023. Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact us at gmunc.xi.unhcr@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing your contributions and hearing your solutions. Thank you for joining us, and we anticipate a productive and insightful committee session.

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 by the UN General Assembly to address the needs of Europeans displaced by World War II.³ Over time, its mandate expanded to protect and assist refugees, asylum seekers, stateless individuals, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide. A prime example being the 1951 Refugee Convention, where they internationally defined refugees and outlined legal rights to these individuals.⁴ UNHCR's primary mission is to safeguard the rights and well-being of those forced to flee due to conflict and persecution. It provides essential humanitarian aid, including shelter, food, water, and medical care, and works to find long-term solutions such as repatriation, local integration, or resettlement in third countries.⁵ Additionally, UNHCR advocates for improved and consistent refugee and asylum laws globally.⁶

The UNHCR operates with key powers such as advocating for international refugee law compliance, delivering humanitarian aid, coordinating with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN agencies, and supporting refugee resettlement and integration. However, it faces significant political constraints due to state sovereignty, which limits its ability to intervene without consent, hindering access to those in need. Furthermore, the UNHCR lacks binding authority, relying on advocacy and negotiation without enforcement power. Its effectiveness also depends

³ "History of UNHCR." UNHCR Africa, 20 Aug. 1921, www.unhcr.org/africa/about-unhcr/who-we-are/history-unhcr#:~:text=Initially%2C%20UNHCR%2C%20the%20UN%20Refugee.

⁴ UNHCR. "The 1951 Refugee Convention." UNHCR, 24 Apr. 2023, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention.

⁵ UNHCR. "Democratic Republic of the Congo Refugee Crisis Explained | USA for UNHCR." Unrefugees.org, 2018, www.unrefugees.org/news/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-refugee-crisis-explained/.

⁶ "Asylum and Migration." UNHCR US, www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/asylum-and-migration.

heavily on the political will of member states, seeing as the UN doesn't have the authority to implement laws into countries. Additionally, funding constraints, security challenges in conflict zones, and political barriers further limit its operations and effectiveness.

Today, UNHCR operates in 135 countries, providing life-saving assistance and defending refugee rights.⁷ It is involved in major crises including Afghanistan, where it supports displaced individuals amidst ongoing conflict, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), assisting millions of displaced people.⁸ UNHCR continues to work towards providing immediate aid and long-term solutions for displaced individuals, aiming to help them rebuild their lives with dignity and security.⁹

Topic Introduction

The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is considered one of the most complex in the world, with its citizens facing violence, hunger, and disease. Around 25.4 million Congolese are food insecure, 13.2 million of them being children.¹⁰ The DRC is the second largest internally displaced people (IDPs) crisis in the world, with the total number of IDPs at 6.2 million.¹¹ According to Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “between 1 October 2023 and 15 March 2024, the UN Joint Human Rights Office documented 2,110 human rights violations and abuses throughout DRC. Of these, 59 percent were committed by armed groups, and they include summary executions and conflict-related sexual violence.”¹² Due to the conflict

⁷ UNHCR. “About UNHCR.” UNHCR, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr.

⁸ “Democratic Republic of the Congo.” UNHCR US, www.unhcr.org/us/countries/democratic-republic-congo.

⁹ “Ongoing Emergencies.” UNHCR, www.unhcr.org/emergencies/ongoing-emergencies.

¹⁰ “What’s Happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?,” Save the Children, <https://www.savethechildren.net/whats-happening-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>.

¹¹ “Democratic Republic of the Congo Situation,” UNHCR, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/democratic-republic-congo-situation>.

¹² Volker Türk, “In DRC, Insecurity Is at Alarming Levels, Türk Reports,” address presented at 55th Session of the Human Rights Council, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, United Nations, accessed April 2, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/drc-insecurity-alarming-levels-turk-reports#:~:text=Between%201%20October%202023%20and,and%20conflict%2Drelated%20sexual%20violence>.

in the DRC, the country has the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world of around 21,000 people.¹³

Many of the issues the DRC faces stem from the economic and political decline of the country since the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath.¹⁴ Initially, the DRC crisis consisted of various battles for power after the country's independence from colonial Belgium in 1960, leading to the assassination of leader Patrice Lumumba and an authoritarian government led by dictator Mobutu Sese Seko for three decades.¹⁵ Then, in October 1990, the Rwandan genocide began after a Tutsi rebel group called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded the country. Then, in April 1994, extremist Hutu groups attacked Tutsis and moderate Hutus, leading to the death of almost one million people in 100 days. During this time, around two million Rwandan Hutu refugees fled to the eastern border of the DRC.

In 1996, the first Congo War began due to the new Tutsi government in Rwanda along with Rwanda-backed Congolese rebel groups invading the DRC in the name of eliminating the risk of the Hutu population living in the country.¹⁶ Along with Rwanda, other neighboring countries— such as Uganda, Angola, and Burundi—participated in the war because of security concerns related to DRC's dictator Mobutu. Mobutu then fled the country, prompting his opposition leader Laurent Kabila to become the DRC leader.¹⁷

¹³ "The Facts: The Humanitarian Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Mercy Corps, last modified July 17, 2019, <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/drc-humanitarian-crisis>.

¹⁴ "The Facts: The Humanitarian Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Mercy Corps, last modified July 17, 2019, <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/drc-humanitarian-crisis>.

¹⁵ Shola Lawal, "A Guide to the Decades-Long Conflict in DR Congo," Al Jazeera, last modified February 21, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20resource%20rich%20country%2C%20now,for%20more%20than%2030%20years.&text=Escalating%20tensions%20in%20the%20Democratic.country%27s%20mineral%20rich%20eastern%20region>.

¹⁶ Shola Lawal, "A Guide to the Decades-Long Conflict in DR Congo," Al Jazeera, last modified February 21, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20resource%20rich%20country%2C%20now,for%20more%20than%2030%20years.&text=Escalating%20tensions%20in%20the%20Democratic.country%27s%20mineral%20rich%20eastern%20region>.

¹⁷ Center for Preventive Action, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified June 20, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>.

Although Kabila and Rwandan leader Paul Kagame previously had an alliance, Kabila began to force foreign troops out of the DRC after he became president.¹⁸ He also began to kick out ethnic Tutsis from his government and wickered Rwanda's military presence in the DRC. Rwanda became even more alarmed when Kabila allowed Hutu military groups to congregate at the DRC-Rwanda border. In response, Rwanda invaded the DRC in 1998.¹⁹ In the midst of the war, Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001, leading to his son Joseph Kabila to come to power. Although the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda began peace agreements in 2002, there was still much unrest in eastern DRC.²⁰

One of the largest Congolese rebel groups is the M23, mostly consisting of ethnic Tutsi people. They especially rose to power in 2012-2013, and the DRC accused Rwanda of supporting the group. After M23 rose to prominence, the UN Security Council issued MONUSCO (The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC) to support the Congolese government in the fight against M23. Following MONUSCO, M23 stopped its initial campaign in 2013. Then, M23 resurfaced in 2022 with violent attacks in North Kivu and gained control over many parts of the region in July 2023, allegedly due to continuous support from Rwanda. Although the U.S. oversaw a ceasefire agreement between the DRC and Rwanda to reduce fighting and hate speech, the fighting has been ongoing, with M23 being accused of serious human rights violations, including summary executions, rape, and forced recruitment of civilians, including children.²¹ Recently, Angola has overseen a new ceasefire agreement

¹⁸ Shola Lawal, "A Guide to the Decades-Long Conflict in DR Congo," Al Jazeera, last modified February 21, 2024,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20resource%20rich%20country%2C%20now,for%20more%20than%2030%20years.&text=Escalating%20tensions%20in%20the%20Democratic.country%27s%20mineral%20rich%20eastern%20region.>

¹⁹ Center for Preventive Action, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified June 20, 2024,

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo.>

²⁰ Center for Preventive Action, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified June 20, 2024,

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo.>

²¹ "DR Congo: Atrocities by Rwanda-Backed M23 Rebels," Human Rights Watch, last modified February 6, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/06/dr-congo-atrocities-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels>.

between Rwanda and the DRC to take place on August 4, 2024, but the humanitarian situation in the DRC is still dire.²²

Key Issues

Part A: Lasting Impacts of Colonialism

To understand how the current situation in the DRC came to be, understanding its colonial history is vital. From the years 1885 to 1908, the Congo Free State, which includes all of current-day DRC, was Belgium's King Leopold's private property. During this time, Congolese history "was marked by slavery, millions of deaths, and widespread atrocities committed during the first colonial exploitation of the territory's exceptional wealth of natural resources."²³ Estimates approximate that around ten million people were killed during his short reign. Furthermore, Congolese resources were put in the hands of foreigners, which continued even after the DRC became independent from Belgium.

Now, much of Congolese mines and other natural resources are in the possession of foreign companies, such as ones based in the U.S. or China. For example, much of the land owned by King Leopold was in the possession of multinational company giant Unilever until they sold parts of their land to other companies, such as Canadian company Feronia Inc.²⁴ Additionally, a U.S. private equity fund also has control over much of those resources, some of those funds coming from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Trust and endowments of several prestigious universities in the United States.²⁵

²² Antoine Baudon, "M23: A Forgotten War and an Overshadowed Ceasefire," International Center for Counter-Terrorism, last modified August 9, 2024,

<https://www.icct.nl/publication/m23-forgotten-war-and-overshadowed-ceasefire>.

²³ Soleil-Chandni Mousseau, "Colonialism Revamped in the Democratic Republic of Congo," African Arguments, last modified April 21, 2024,

<https://africanarguments.org/2024/04/colonialism-revamped-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/#:~:text=64%20years%20after%20its%20independence,rights%20abuses%2C%20hunger%20and%20poverty>.

²⁴ WRM Bulletin 260, "A Century of Agro-Colonialism in the DR Congo," World Rainforest Movement, last modified March 23, 2022,

<https://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin-articles/a-century-of-agro-colonialism-in-the-dr-congo>.

²⁵ Soleil-Chandni Mousseau, "Colonialism Revamped in the Democratic Republic of Congo," African Arguments, last modified April 21, 2024,

<https://africanarguments.org/2024/04/colonialism-revamped-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/#:~:text=64%20years%20after%20its%20independence,rights%20abuses%2C%20hunger%20and%20poverty>.

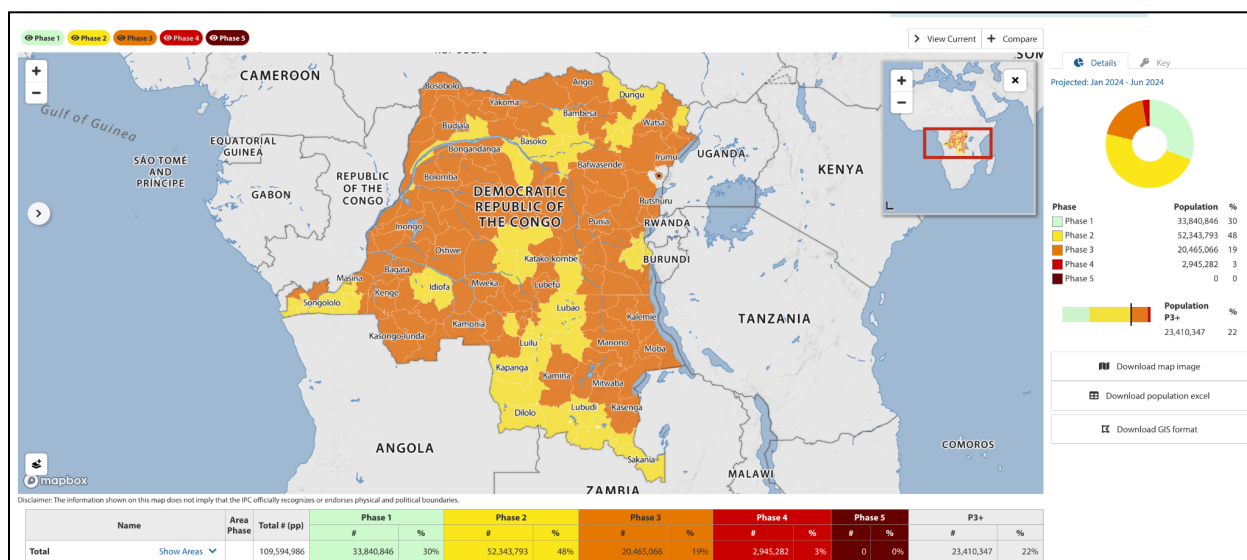
The laborers working in these mines and plantations are mostly unpaid and experience harsh working conditions. According to African Arguments, “their [laborers] day-to-day life is plagued by violence and repression prosecuted by plantation security forces and police forces directed by the company, with a myriad of unlawful detentions, beatings, torture, and even murders.”²⁶ These horrid conditions pushed many Congolese people to join armed groups in order to earn money and provide for their families.

Part B: Inadequate Food and Housing Conditions

Various factors contribute to the ongoing IDP and refugee crises in the DRC, such as inadequate food and housing. A lack of food in local areas drives individuals away, and insecure housing leads people to search for better security.

Food:

Many countries struggle with famine and sadly, the DRC is among them, with an estimated 41.7% of their population being undernourished.²⁷ The DRC faces severe food insecurity, ranging from phases 1 to 4 (out of 5), with 48% of the population experiencing phase 2 conditions.



²⁶ Soleil-Chandni Mousseau, "Colonialism Revamped in the Democratic Republic of Congo," African Arguments, last modified April 21, 2024, <https://africanarguments.org/2024/04/colonialism-revamped-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/#:~:text=64%20years%20after%20its%20independence,rights%20abuses%2C%20hunger%20and%20poverty.>

²⁷ "What We Know about Hunger in the DRC in 2021 | Concern Worldwide." Concernusa.org, 22 Oct. 2021, concernusa.org/news/hunger-in-drc-worlds-largest-food-crisis/.

(Image from IPC food map)²⁸

The official Integrated Food Security Phase Classification defines the 5 phases as follows:²⁹

- Phase 1 (Minimal): Population can meet food and non-food needs without unsustainable strategies. Less than 5% malnutrition.
- Phase 2 (Stressed): Adequate food consumption but struggles with non-food needs. 5-10% malnutrition.
- Phase 3 (Crisis): Food consumption gaps or reliance on crisis coping strategies. 10-15% malnutrition.
- Phase 4 (Emergency): Large food consumption gaps, very high malnutrition, and **excess deaths**. 15-30% malnutrition.
- Phase 5 (Famine): Extreme lack of food, high death rates, over 30% malnutrition.^{30 31}

Contributing factors include ongoing conflict, economic decline, high food prices, the lingering impact of COVID-19, and poor agricultural infrastructure despite fertile land.³²

Key stakeholders in the DRC food crises include the UN World Food Program (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP), which provides emergency food and nutritional support. Locally, there is a need for conflict resolution, economic stability, and improved agricultural practices.

²⁸ "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for July - December 2023 and Projection for January - June 2024 | IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification." www.ipcinfo.org, www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156611/?iso3=COD.

²⁹ "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Acute Food Insecurity Situation July - December 2022 and Projection for January - June 2023 | IPC Global Platform." www.ipcinfo.org, 18 Oct. 2022, www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155972/?iso3=COD.

³⁰ "IPC Acute Food Insecurity Classification | IPC Global Platform." www.ipcinfo.org, www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/ipc-overview-and-classification-system/ipc-acute-food-insecurity-classification/en/#:~:text=In%20particular%2C%20the%20IPC%20Acute.

³¹ "The 5 Steps from Food Security to Famine | World Food Programme." www.wfp.org, www.wfp.org/stories/5-steps-food-security-famine.

³² "Democratic Republic of Congo: Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Situation September 2021 - August 2022 | IPC Global Platform." www.ipcinfo.org, www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155280/.

Internationally, the focus is on humanitarian aid, livelihood support, and disease management, with a call for sustainable, long-term solutions.³³

Efforts to combat food insecurity in the DRC involve multiple strategies. Conflict resolution, especially in Katanga and Kivu provinces, is crucial to allow displaced households to return home and rebuild their lives. Humanitarian assistance is essential for populations in IPC Phases 3 and 4 to improve food consumption, particularly in the Eastern provinces and central regions.³⁴ Livelihood support includes enhancing access to agricultural tools, seeds, and technical capacity, and supporting livestock herding communities and small-scale farmers against diseases. Additionally, strengthening measures to combat waterborne diseases and continuing COVID-19 efforts are vital.

The DRC has one of the world's most favorable climates for agriculture and fertile soils, with the potential to feed over 2 billion people through suitable investments.³⁵ However, hunger is triggered by poor harvests, violence-driven displacement, disease, unemployment, and collapsing infrastructure. International actions, such as those by USAID and its partners, focus on providing emergency food assistance and nutritional support to vulnerable communities. By addressing these issues and leveraging the country's agricultural potential, it is possible to mitigate the food insecurity crisis and move towards sustainable food security in the DRC.

Inadequate food in the DRC has led hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in search of nutritional food, thus leading these people to be classified as IDPs, increasing DRC's displaced population.³⁶

Housing:

³³ "Food Assistance Fact Sheet - Democratic Republic of the Congo | Food Assistance | U.S. Agency for International Development." U.S. Agency for International Development, 6 May 2020, www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/democratic-republic-congo.

³⁴ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Situation September 2021 - August 2022 | IPC Global Platform." Wwww.ipcinfo.org, www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155280/.

³⁵ "Achieving Long-Term Food Security in DRC Is All about Building Resilience - Democratic Republic of the Congo | ReliefWeb." Reliefweb.int, 7 Nov. 2022, reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/achieving-long-term-food-security-drc-all-about-building-resilience.

³⁶ "Democratic Republic of the Congo Situation." Global Focus, reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/democratic-republic-congo-situation#:~:text=The%20challenges%20of%20the%20past.

The DRC faces a severe housing crisis, particularly in urban areas like Kinshasa, where nearly half of the households are tenants, with 44% paying rent and 14% living rent-free.³⁷ The country needs almost 4 million new homes each year, but Kinshasa alone loses over 143,000 homes annually. Despite 69.9% of families owning homes, many are substandard, and homelessness is widespread.³⁸

High urban unemployment at 83% and the prevalence of informal employment (88.6%) limit people's ability to afford decent housing. Real estate prices are high due to a demand-supply gap and expensive construction costs, worsened by poor infrastructure and logistical challenges.³⁹ Housing, land, and property rights (HLP) issues also intersect with other sectors, complicating efforts to address the crisis.⁴⁰

The displacement crisis, with 6.9 million people displaced across the country, further strains housing resources. The eastern regions, home to 5.6 million displaced individuals, have heightened demands for aid, leading to poor conditions in displacement camps and increased security risks, especially for women and girls.⁴¹

Solutions involve addressing land and property rights, creating formal employment opportunities, and supporting small businesses. Infrastructure investment is crucial to reduce construction costs and make housing more affordable. International aid and humanitarian efforts are vital to provide immediate relief and secure living conditions for displaced populations. Through these measures, the DRC can work towards resolving its housing crisis and improving living standards for its people.

Inadequate housing leads these individuals to seek better security thus increasing the amount of people classified as IDPs.

³⁷ Batana, Yele, et al. Profiling Living Conditions of the DRC Urban Population Access to Housing and Services in Kinshasa Province. 2021.

³⁸ "Congo, Democratic Republic of The." CAHF | Centre for Affordable Housing Finance Africa, 20 Dec. 2018, housingfinanceafrica.org/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/#:~:text=Every%20year%2C%20the%20DRC%20requires.

³⁹ D, Pierre. "The Real Estate Market in Congo-Kinshasa: 2024 Forecast." The Africaninvestor, The Africaninvestor, 7 Jan. 2024, theafricaninvestor.com/blogs/news/congo-dr-real-estate-market#:~:text=Comparatively%2C%20real%20estate%20prices%20in. Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

⁴⁰ "Landless and Displaced - the Struggle for Housing, Land and Property Rights in Eastern DR Congo | Global Protection Cluster." Globalprotectioncluster.org, 28 Mar. 2023, www.globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/1740/communication-materials/advocacy-note/landless-and-displaced-struggle-housing. Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

⁴¹ "Crisis in the DRC: What You Need to Know and How to Help | International Rescue Committee (IRC)." Wwww.rescue.org, 22 Apr. 2024, www.rescue.org/article/crisis-drc-what-you-need-know-and-how-help.

Part C: Extra Vulnerability of Women and Children (Gender-Based Violence)

One of the most pronounced components of the conflict in the DRC is the alarming surge in gender-based violence (GBV).⁴² Reports of sexual violence have surged in the eastern DRC, with a 91% increase in North Kivu from 2021 to 2022, and the trend continues in 2023. OCHA reported 46,000 GBV cases from May to August 2023 in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri.⁴³ This region is now one of the most dangerous places globally for women and children.

Three main factors drive the rise in GBV:

- Intensified conflict leads to increased displacement and armed men.
- Insufficient humanitarian assistance, leaving 23.4 million people in crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity.
- Inadequate shelter and land for IDPs, forcing women and girls to live without privacy or security, increasing their vulnerability.⁴⁴

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), gender-based violence is both pervasive and entrenched in societal and cultural norms. Shockingly, 29% of girls are married before they turn 18, with 8% married before 15.⁴⁵ These figures are even more alarming in rural areas, where 40% of women are married before 18 and 11% before 15. Child marriage stands as the most widespread form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls across the nation.⁴⁶ Violence against children is also pervasive, with many subjected to physical punishment, child labor, and early marriage.⁴⁷

⁴² “Ensuring Women’s Protection amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC.” Refugees International, www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/ensuring-womens-protection-amid-rising-conflict-in-eastern-drc/.

⁴³ “Ensuring Women’s Protection amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC.” Refugees International, www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/ensuring-womens-protection-amid-rising-conflict-in-eastern-drc/#:~:text=GBV%20in%20the%20DRC.

⁴⁴ “Ensuring Women’s Protection amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC.” Refugees International, www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/ensuring-womens-protection-amid-rising-conflict-in-eastern-drc/#:~:text=GBV%20in%20the%20DRC.

⁴⁵ “Democratic Republic of the Congo.” Girls Not Brides, 24 Aug. 2023, www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/#:~:text=29%25%20of%20girls%20in%20the.

⁴⁶ “Ensuring Women’s Protection amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC - Refugees International.” Refugees International, 5 Apr. 2024, www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/ensuring-womens-protection-amid-rising-conflict-in-eastern-drc/). Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

⁴⁷ “Child Protection.” Unicef.org, 2019, www.unicef.org/drcongo/en/what-we-do/child-protection.

Addressing the humanitarian crisis in the DRC involves key stakeholders and coordinated international efforts. The UNHCR plays a pivotal role in protecting the physical and mental well-being of displaced communities, offering psychosocial and medical care, and ensuring sanitation and living standards in camps.⁴⁸ Their efforts focus on the specific needs of displaced women, girls, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) provides essential emergency health services and hygiene support.⁴⁹ Additionally, the U.S. The Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) actively combats violence and enhances protection programs.

Combating gender-based violence in the DRC requires coordinated efforts. Donors and humanitarian actors must prioritize providing essential needs like food to IDPs and integrate housing, land, and property (HLP) rights for their eventual return. Addressing GBV also involves widespread awareness campaigns in schools, professional settings, NGOs, and the media. Key strategies include training professionals, rehabilitating perpetrators, empowering women, engaging men and boys, promoting gender equality, and challenging harmful stereotypes.⁵⁰ Enhancing protection measures for women and girls are crucial steps toward mitigating the IDP crisis and fostering long-term stability and security in the DRC.

Current Situation

Part A: Mining

One reason the conflict in the DRC has been going on for over three decades is the abundant natural resources found in the country's soil. Most notably, the DRC's biggest exports are cobalt, copper, diamonds, gold, and oil. The DRC's untapped mineral resources are estimated to be worth around 24 trillion dollars.⁵¹ These

⁴⁸ "UNHCR Warns of Mounting Violence against Women and Girls in Eastern DRC." UNHCR US, www.unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-warns-mounting-violence-against-women-and-girls-eastern-drc.

⁴⁹ "Democratic Republic of Congo." International Rescue Committee (IRC), www.rescue.org/country/democratic-republic-congo.

⁵⁰ "How to Prevent Gender-Based Violence." Wwww.eeagender.org, www.eeagender.org/good-practices/How-prevent-gender-based-violence/.

⁵¹ "Democratic Republic of the Congo - Market Overview," International Trade Administration, last modified March 14, 2024,

resources have been a part of the crisis for decades, starting with Rwandan and Ugandan looting of DRC's minerals during the civil wars. Furthermore, many armed groups battle for control of Congolese mineral resource mines to fund their invasions.⁵² Although the U.S. attempted to reduce the purchase of "conflict materials" to stop the flow of money to Congolese rebel groups, companies find it difficult to obtain certification due to the complex supply chains in buying Congolese minerals. These difficulties have led to many international companies not buying minerals from the DRC, causing unemployment rates for miners to rise even more and for some of them to join rebel groups to provide for their families.⁵³ Furthermore, Congolese armed groups' desire to use the mines for war funding has caused the essential enslavement of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children who are effectively enslaved.⁵⁴ One of the most important components in lithium-ion batteries, cobalt, is primarily mined by enslaved Congolese.⁵⁵

Additionally, in recent years, Chinese companies have bought the majority of the foreign-owned cobalt, uranium, and copper mines in the DRC. This partnership also means that China is assisting the DRC by providing Chinese drones and weaponry. According to the Council of Foreign Relations, the monopoly China holds has caused "limited access to the Congo's vital resources and profits for other countries and the Congolese people themselves."⁵⁶ Although the DRC is very mineral-rich and has incredible potential to be a wealthy nation, due to foreign nations and rebel groups

<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/democratic-republic-congo-market-overview#:~:text=Most%20of%20the%20country%27s%20mineral,to%20be%20worth%20%2424%20trillion>.

⁵² Shola Lawal, "A Guide to the Decades-Long Conflict in DR Congo," Al Jazeera, last modified February 21, 2024,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20resource%2Drich%20country%2C%20now,for%20more%20than%2030%20years.&text=Escalating%20tensions%20in%20the%20Democratic.country%27s%20mineral%2Drich%20eastern%20region>.

⁵³ USCRI, "The Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," USCRI Backgrounder,

https://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/USCRI-Backgrounder_DRC.pdf.

⁵⁴ James Rupert, "In Congo, Peace Means a Halt to 'Brutal, Illegal Mining,'" United States Institute of Peace, last modified March 7, 2024,

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/congo-peace-means-halt-brutal-illegal-mining>.

⁵⁵ Terry Gross, "How 'Modern-day Slavery' in the Congo Powers the Rechargeable Battery Economy," NPR, last modified February 1, 2023,

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2023/02/01/1152893248/red-cobalt-congo-drc-mining-siddharth-kara>.

⁵⁶ Center for Preventive Action, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified June 20, 2024,

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>.

monopolizing Congolese mines and exploiting the people, the country has stayed very poor.

Part B: Corrupt Government

In 2019, with a score of 18/100, the DRC ranked 168 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.⁵⁷ The DRC is plagued on many levels by corruption: petty corruption, political patronage, and electoral corruption.⁵⁸ Petty corruption, such as bribery, is widespread and normalized in the DRC. Currently, "the DRC has the highest overall bribery rate in sub-Saharan Africa as the GCB showed that 80% of respondents said they needed to pay bribes for public services such as the police, water supply, and identification documents."⁵⁹ Additionally, Congolese are taxed at very high rates at around 40-50% of their income, which tax officials use to bribe their superiors while pocketing some of the money for themselves.⁶⁰

Another type of corruption includes political patronage and clientelism, meaning politicians give jobs or contracts to their allies, friends, or family members. In the context of the DRC, one stark example is Joseph Kabila, the previous president of the DRC, and his family. A report by the Congo Research Group found that his family had "invested in almost every part of the Congolese economy, including farming, mining, banking, real estate, telecommunications and airlines."⁶¹ Because of his investments, Kabila still holds a lot of power in their national government.

⁵⁷ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

⁵⁸ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

⁵⁹ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

⁶⁰ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

⁶¹ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

Electoral corruption is common in the DRC. In recent years, elections in the DRC, especially the 2018 election where Félix Tshisekedi became president, have come under intense scrutiny for manipulation of votes.⁶² Additionally, in the 2018 election, armed groups and state forces threatened Congolese voters living in the eastern regions to vote for candidates supported by the main party. Furthermore, “more than a million Congolese were unable to vote when voting was postponed until March 2019 in three pro-opposition areas.”⁶³

The more than 120 armed groups in the DRC have been able to operate because of weak governance.⁶⁴ According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), “the combination of a weak state and abundance of natural resources creates opportunities for external agents to take advantage of the power vacuum to exploit natural resources.”⁶⁵ Because the Congolese government doesn't have strict regulations over the national resources, “the exploitation of natural resources can be both an incentive for rebellion against the state as well as a fuel of the war machinery.”⁶⁶

Part C: Refugees From Other Countries

Along with the IDP crisis the Democratic Republic of the Congo also struggles with a less prominent yet significant refugee crisis. Refugees account for 7.5%⁶⁷ of the internally displaced population in the DRC, with over 523,000 refugees and asylum-seekers residing in the country as of June 2023.⁶⁸ These refugees, primarily

⁶² USCRI, "The Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," USCRI Backgrounder, https://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/USCRI-Backgrounder_DRC.pdf.

⁶³ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

⁶⁴ "Crisis in the DRC: What You Need to Know and How to Help," International Rescue Committee, last modified April 22, 2024, <https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-drc-what-you-need-know-and-how-help>.

⁶⁵ USCRI, "The Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," USCRI Backgrounder, https://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/USCRI-Backgrounder_DRC.pdf.

⁶⁶ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview of Corruption and Anti-corruption," Chr. Michelin Institute, <https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion>.

⁶⁷ "Democratic Republic of the Congo Situation." Global Focus, reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/democratic-republic-congo-situation#:~:text=As%20a%20result%20of%20this.

⁶⁸ "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Monthly Statistics of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (as of 30 April 2024) - Democratic Republic of the Congo." ReliefWeb, 21 May 2024,

from neighboring countries like the Central African Republic (CAR), Rwanda, South Sudan, and Burundi, place substantial strain on the DRC's resources, especially in rural areas.⁶⁹ Addressing this crisis requires an understanding of its historical context, current dynamics, and the involved stakeholders, along with coordinated international efforts.

The DRC's refugee crisis escalated in the 1990s due to economic downturns and violent conflicts. Notably, the Rwandan genocide in 1994 forced over 1.2 million refugees into the country.⁷⁰ This influx destabilized the region, contributing to the First Congo War (1996-1997) and the Second Congo War (1998-2003). By 2000, the number of Congolese migrants and refugees in neighboring countries had more than doubled to 700,000 and exceeded 1 million by 2015.⁷¹

As of June 2023, over 523,000 refugees and asylum-seekers reside in the DRC, with 75% in rural areas, 23% in planned settlements, and 2% in urban areas.⁷² Recent conflicts, such as the violence during the December 2020 elections in CAR, have led to significant new arrivals, including around 92,000 refugees from CAR. Despite ongoing inflows, the total number of international migrants and refugees in the DRC has decreased, from over 650,000 in 1990 to more than 400,000 by mid-2015.⁷³

Key stakeholders include countries of origin, international organizations like UNHCR, donor nations, NGOs, and local communities. UNHCR coordinates efforts, establishes camps, and advocates for refugee rights, with support from donor funding.⁷⁴

reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-monthly-statistics-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-30-april-2024#:~:text=Situation%20Overview. Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

⁶⁹ "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Monthly Statistics of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (as of 30 April 2024) - Democratic Republic of the Congo." ReliefWeb, 21 May 2024,

reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-monthly-statistics-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-30-april-2024#:~:text=Situation%20Overview. Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

⁷⁰ The Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Quick Overview.

⁷¹ "Timeline: Democratic Republic of Congo's Crisis at a Glance." Concernusa.org, 8 Feb. 2020, concernusa.org/news/drc-crisis-timeline/.

⁷² "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Refugee Policy Review Framework Country Summary as at 30 June 2023 (Update of the Summary as at 30 June 2023) - Democratic Republic of the Congo." ReliefWeb, 13 Mar. 2024,

reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-refugee-policy-review-framework-country-summary-30-june-2023-update-summary-30-june-2023#:~:text=The%20main%20countries%20of%20origin. Accessed 7 Aug. 2024.

⁷³ Schoumaker, Bruno. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Migration History Marked by Crises and Restrictions." Migrationpolicy.org, 2 Mar. 2017,

www.migrationpolicy.org/article/democratic-republic-congo-migration-history-marked-crises-and-restriction.

⁷⁴ "UNHCR US |." UNHCR US, www.unhcr.org/us/.

NGOs provide essential services, and local communities manage integration challenges.

To address the refugee crisis, coordinated international efforts are essential. Donors and humanitarian actors must ensure refugees receive basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. Housing, land, and property rights should be prioritized to enable voluntary repatriation or local integration. Peace-building initiatives in refugees' home countries are vital to address the root causes of displacement. Long-term strategies should promote self-reliance and economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities.⁷⁵ Collaborative and sustainable strategies are crucial to mitigating the humanitarian impact of the refugee crisis in the DRC and fostering regional stability.

Conclusion

These were the primary subtopics impacting the DRC's IDP and refugee crisis, but numerous other factors also contributed, including natural disasters, economic instability, an inadequate education system, child labor and abuse, and more. We urge you to delve deeper into these issues, as this background guide is merely a starting point.

Past International Actions

The United Nations, particularly through the UNHCR, has played a pivotal role in addressing the crisis in the DRC. In the DRC, UNHCR supports over 911,000 IDPs and refugees by providing psychosocial care, medical assistance, shelter, and maintaining sanitation in camps.⁷⁶ ⁷⁷ They build community kitchens, install water infrastructure, and distribute essential items like blankets and cooking pots, with a focus on the needs of women, girls, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Amnesty International. "Amnesty International." Amnesty.org, 2019, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2015/10/eight-solutions-world-refugee-crisis/.

⁷⁶ UNHCR. "About UNHCR." UNHCR, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr.

⁷⁷ UNHCR. "Democratic Republic of the Congo Refugee Crisis Explained | USA for UNHCR." Unrefugees.org, 2018, www.unrefugees.org/news/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-refugee-crisis-explained/.

⁷⁸ "Ongoing Emergencies." UNHCR, www.unhcr.org/emergencies/ongoing-emergencies.

Several international bodies and NGOs also have contributed significantly. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) offers emergency health services and hygiene support, collaborating with local communities and hospitals.⁷⁹ The U.S. The Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) helps combat violence and supports protection programs.⁸⁰

USAID has focused on fostering peace and stability in eastern DRC. From 2015 to 2019, USAID/DRC emphasized conflict resolution, citizen engagement, and women's participation in peacebuilding in regions like North and South Kivu, northern Katanga, and parts of Maniema and Orientale. They prioritized practical solutions to conflict and flexible, inclusive approaches.⁸¹

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. As of June 2023, the UN has spent \$24.3 billion on the peacekeeping mission in the DRC, yet security issues persist, with the number of illegal armed groups increasing to 250, and worsening human rights conditions with civilian suffering.⁸²

These actions demonstrate the international community's ongoing commitment to addressing the crisis in the DRC, providing immediate relief, and striving for long-term stability and development.

⁷⁹ "Crisis in the DRC: What You Need to Know and How to Help | International Rescue Committee (IRC)." www.rescue.org, 22 Apr. 2024, www.rescue.org/article/crisis-drc-what-you-need-know-and-how-help.

⁸⁰ "Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration." United States Department of State, www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-population-refugees-and-migration/.

⁸¹ "Working in Crises and Conflict | Democratic Republic of the Congo | U.S. Agency for International Development." www.usaid.gov, 21 Apr. 2017, www.usaid.gov/democratic-republic-congo/working-crises-and-conflict.

⁸² "Democratic Republic of Congo Battling Worsening Humanitarian Crisis, Armed Conflict, despite Recent Peaceful Elections, Special Representative Tells Security Council | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." [Press.un.org](http://press.un.org), 27 Mar. 2024, press.un.org/en/2024/sc15646.doc.htm.

Questions to Consider

- a. What do you think about the negative impacts of colonialism on the DRC's present-day political and economic situation? Do you think the DRC is deserving of reparations?
- b. How can we implement a stable food source, into the DRC, instead of short intervention strategies?
- c. How can new avenues for well-paying work be created in the DRC to deter people from joining armed groups to provide for their families?
- d. How should the delicate relations between the DRC and Rwanda be balanced while deciding how to address the issues of groups like M23?
- e. What are ways that the UNHCR can help alleviate the issue of gender-based violence in the DRC?
- f. How should the DRC address their refugee crisis while also assisting their IDPs?

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