



Diaspora engagement mapping

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Facts & figures

Terminology: The Democratic Republic of the Congo refers to its diaspora as Congolese abroad (*congolais de l'étranger*), although the term diaspora is also sometimes used. Anyone belonging to the ethnic groups whose persons and territory constituted what became Congo (currently the Democratic Republic of the Congo) at independence, is a Congolese national.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad³



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **4.97%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **3,298**

Data disclaimer

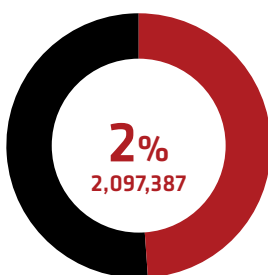
As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

Emigration

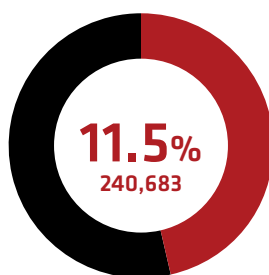
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 49.4%
♀ 50.6%



♂ 45.3%
♀ 54.7%

Top countries of destination



Uganda	637,206
Rwanda	236,385
Burundi	224,091
Congo	168,387
France	120,178

¹ Loi N° 04/024 du 12 Novembre 2004 Relative à la Nationalité Congolaise: <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Code%20de%20la%20famille/LIVRE%20I%20DE%20LA%20NATIONALITE.htm> In 2019 Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi called for an in-depth reflection on the question of dual nationality and for the question to be resolved, see: <https://taarifa.rw/president-tshisekedi-pokes-dual-nationality-debate/>

² Loi n°06/006 du 09 mars 2006 portant organisation des élections présidentielles législatives https://www.droitcongolais.info/files/111.03.06-Loi-du-9-mars-2006_Organisation-des-elections.pdf. However, diaspora members have to be registered to vote in the country, which in practical terms makes it very difficult to vote.

³ In 2023, the DRC elected a new president and Congolese living abroad were able to participate for the first time in this election. The test phase involved South Africa, Belgium, Canada, the United States and France). Diaspora participation was already provided for in the electoral law, but it had not been organized for logistical reasons during previous elections.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



2002
 >
 2015

- Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy Document does not refer to diaspora or Congolese abroad explicitly (in part due to constitutional and political sensitivities), but it does so implicitly through references to migration as a means to mobilize resources and skills in combatting poverty. This document also included a plan to establish a national programme on migration, although it is not clear if this was ever developed.⁵

>> Trends & achievements

The country's history of civil war and conflict has created great needs in terms of basic goods and healthcare in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), and its diaspora have been quite active in developing a growing not-for-profit sector, mostly through informal initiatives responding to local needs.

Following the civil war, managing the return of Congolese and other migrants and refugees from neighbouring countries has arguably been a greater priority for the government than attempting to engage the Congolese diaspora based permanently abroad in national development projects and business investment.⁶

The creation of the Vice-Ministry for Congolese Nationals Abroad within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2006 reflects the growing importance of diaspora remittances to the country's economy from the 2000s onwards, as well as increasing political interest in the diaspora from then President Kabila to support national reconstruction. Since this time, progress in diaspora engagement and in developing policies and programmes targeting the diaspora has been slow and uneven.

One of the drivers of this inertia has been the contested issue of diaspora participation in the country's civic and political life, which has fed into distrust between the government and its diaspora. This continues to hinder diaspora engagement policy and programme development, as well as greater participation by the diaspora. Despite moves towards enabling dual citizenship, this has not yet been achieved in practice, thus discouraging the Congolese diaspora from greater participation in the civic and economic life of the country.

However, the election of the new government in 2019 has the potential to usher in an era of more constructive engagement with its diaspora.⁷ The government has stated that it is planning to improve the channels and opportunities available for the diaspora to communicate with the government, including organisation of diaspora events as well as a dedicated web portal. Other services are also in development, including a Guide for Congolese Abroad and information on investment opportunities.⁸ In addition, the government is seeking to build the technical capacity of the Directorate of Congolese Abroad and embassy staff and it is developing a small database to improve data collection on its diaspora.⁹

Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo has created some structures and institutions to enable diaspora engagement, these have not yet reached their full potential. Moreover, implementation remains a challenge as the country has been affected by a series of

4 Personal communication, AFFORD/ MIEUX 2019.

5 <https://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/2002/cod/01/033102.pdf>

6 See Marie-Laurence Flahaux (2015), 'Return Migration to Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo: Intention and Realization' in *Population* 2015/1 (Vol. 70); and also Jean-Pierre K. Bongila, 'The State of Leadership and Diaspora Engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)' in Jack Mangala (ed) (2017), *Africa and its Global Diaspora -The Policy and Politics of Emigration*, African Histories and Modernities Book Series

7 <https://saiia.org.za/research/the-road-ahead-for-the-drc/>

8 AU Diaspora Self-Assessment Toolkit : DR Congo (2019), available at: <https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/2019%20Diaspora%20Engagement%20Self%20Assessment%20Report%20ENG.pdf>

9 Ibid.

humanitarian emergencies in recent years, putting pressure on limited government resources. Parts of the country have been affected by serious and disruptive infectious disease outbreaks, including Ebola, and diaspora health professionals and scientists have been closely involved in the scientific and humanitarian responses to these.¹⁰

For the 2023 elections, the Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante organised out-of-country voting. Registered Congolese voters in Belgium, Canada, France, South Africa, and the United States had the opportunity to vote in the presidential elections for the first time.¹¹

Obstacles



- **Lack of policy coordination and implementation** is the most urgent challenge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the field of migration and development and diaspora engagement. At the formal level, there is a centralisation of public administration structures, but in practice, ministries and other national institutions often struggle to effectively work in synergy. There is still no dedicated diaspora policy for the country.
- **Lack of diaspora political representation:** The notion of citizenship remains deeply controversial as the Democratic Republic of the Congo places limitations on dual citizenship and diaspora voting, which can be a challenge for diaspora interested in returning and investing in the country. In part, this can be attributed to the legacy of the civil war in the country.
- **Institutional focus on migration management:** DR Congo has been affected by regional conflict and instability and has had to manage significant numbers of migrants and refugees from neighbouring countries whilst at the same time seeking to stem outward migration of its own citizens and resulting brain-drain. This has caused the focus of the government to be on border management rather than migration and development.
- **Difficult business environment:** DR Congo was rated 184 out of 190 countries in the World Bank's 2020 Doing Business Report.¹² Investment flows to the country are reportedly constrained by cumbersome regulations, excessive taxation and corruption. These issues are repeatedly cited by Congolese diaspora as barriers to increased participation in the country's economic life.

10 Personal communication, East African Infectious Diseases Surveillance Network (EAIDSNET) , January 2020

11 For the 2023 elections, the Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante organised out-of-country voting. Registered Congolese voters in Belgium, Canada, France, South Africa, and the United States had the opportunity to vote in the presidential elections for the first time.

12 Available at: https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf

SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices

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Solidarco: Diaspora Health Insurance in DRC

HEALTH

Solidarco was launched in 2010, with the support of Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI) with the aim to enable the Congolese diaspora to finance healthcare for relatives living in Kinshasa. By paying 30 euros per month, or 1 euro per day, a member of the Congolese diaspora in Belgium finances healthcare and hospitalisation cover for seven people. While WBI financially supported the launch of the project in the first two years, Solidarco is now self-financed by contributions from contributors in the diaspora.

Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA)¹³

HUMAN CAPITAL

The MIDA programme was implemented by IOM in collaboration with the DRC Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Security with funding from the Belgian government from 2001 to 2013. The programme supported the socio-economic development of the country through the transfer of knowledge and technical know-how on the basis of short-term consultancy from highly qualified expatriate DRC nationals, with over 200 MIDA missions to the country undertaken by 2013.¹⁴

House of Congolese Abroad and Migrations

NETWORKS

The House of Congolese Abroad and Migrations (Maison des Congolais de l'Etranger et des Migrations, MCDEM) was created in 2009 to provide services to returning Congolese migrants and to enable greater representation of the diaspora. It serves as a crossroads for exchanges and the organization of cultural, economic and socio-professional activities that brings the diaspora closer to each other and to the official institutions of the country. New management was installed in 2016, and a House of the Congolese Abroad was opened in Paris in the same year.

2022-2023 MIEUX + project

POLICY

The Directorate of Congolese Abroad under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) requested support from MIEUX+ to strengthen the efforts of the Congolese Government to protect its citizens abroad with a more efficient policy framework. Together with partners and experts, The MIEUX+ and local and European experts delivered the following documents:

- Consular Protection Plan
- Report on data collection exercise on the main challenges in consular protection from the perspective of the diaspora and consular officers
- Training manual on consular protection for MFA staff members

¹³ <https://www.iom.int/countries/democratic-republic-congo#md>; personal communication, ICMPD 2020.

¹⁴ Julie Heraud (2010), 'Migration and Development: An Insight into the Experiences and Perceptions of Skilled Migrants Involved in the MIDA Great Lakes Programme', Working Paper 59, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex.

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a member of the African Union and nominates a diaspora focal point to represent DR Congo as part of the AU CIDO Continental Meetings.

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also a member COMESA, ECCAS, and SADC.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Since 2006, this ministry has included a Vice-Ministry of the Congolese of abroad. The Vice-Ministry has the following mandates: mobilisation of the Congolese of abroad for the development of the country and their integration into national life; identification, census and monitoring of Congolese abroad; protection and defence of the rights, interests and stay of the Congolese abroad. The Vice-Ministry of Congolese Abroad is playing an increasingly important role in the synergy of action between the diaspora and the country of origin.

- At sub-ministerial level

Directorate of Congolese Abroad (DCE) (no website available)

Following the 2006 elections, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Ministry of Public Service announced through the Inter-ministerial Order n° 130/CAB/MINAFFECI/014 of 13 July 2006, the creation, organisation and functioning of the Directorate of Congolese Abroad (DCE). It is the lead department within the ministry for diaspora engagement.

National Agency for the Promotions of Investments

The Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements (ANAPI) is the government council for Investments in DR Congo. ANAPI works to improve the business climate and promote a positive image of DR Congo in order to attract investment to the country; to provide investors with various services to facilitate their establishment in the country and to make them competitive.

Fédération des entreprises du Congo – FEC

The FEC guides companies step-by-step towards their success and partners with them at all times in order to 'build together' their projects. The FEC also values local resources, cultivates the spirit of entrepreneurship and boosts the image of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its companies.

The FEC website is the main platform providing information to members of the diaspora interested in investment opportunities and seeking information on administrative processes and taxation.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

African Diaspora Youth Forum in Europe (ADYFE)

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a
diaspora organisation](#)"



Development activities

The African Diaspora Youth Forum in Europe (ADYFE) is a platform consisting of nearly 110 youth organizations of the African Diaspora present in 31 countries of the Council of Europe. Founded in 2014, ADYFE aims to empower African diaspora youth through three pillars of action: entrepreneurship, employability, and civic engagement.

Association de la Solidarité Internationale du Congo Kinshasa en France

Development activities

The association works to organize permanent and regular dialogues in order to fight together against violence and acts of vandalism, to share knowledge, skills and unity, and to raise public awareness on development issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Convention des Congolais à l'Etranger 2014

The Convention des Congolais à l'Etranger is a non-profit organisation established in Charmey, Switzerland, which serves as a platform to unite Congolese nationals living abroad and foster their active participation in the development of DRC. Its primary mission is to encourage and facilitate investments in the DRC, offer capacity-building programmes, and organise advocacy and representation for the Congolese diaspora.

Fédération de la Diaspora Congolaise

Development activities

The federation works to build solidarity with the Congolese diaspora and improve the quality of life of the Congolese people. To do so, they are developing a Congolese network to promote entrepreneurship within communities and support economic and associative activities.

Les Amis du Congo Solidarité Belgium

Development activities

Les Amis du Congo Solidarité works to ensure solidarity and exchange of information between the communities of Belgium, and promote the integration of the Congolese community and people of Congolese origin in Belgium. It supports young people who drop out of school, assists political refugees awaiting regularisation, and provides humanitarian aid and vocational training to child soldiers and street children in DR Congo.

TSHELA Belgium

Development activities

TSHELA aims to contribute to the development of the hospital sector in DRC through continuous training of health professionals and informative events on women's specific medical problems.

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