



DR Congo

DR Congo: Current Path

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Chart 2: Population structure in Current Path, 1990-2043

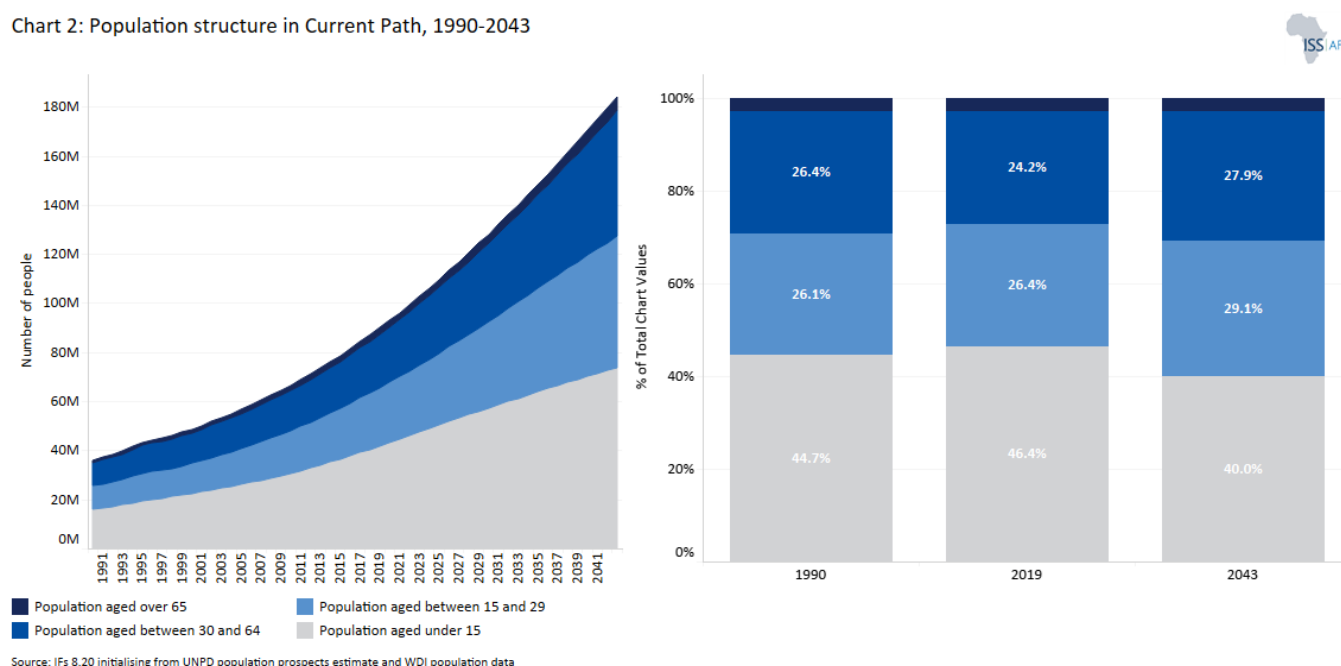


Chart 2 presents the population structure to 2043 in the Current Path forecast.

DR Congo is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with about 215 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups. French, introduced by Belgian colonists, is DR Congo's official language. However, most Congolese people are fluent in other languages such as Swahili, Lingala, Kikongo and Tshiluba. The majority of the population in DR Congo is Christian, with nearly 70% belonging to **various denominations**, followed by African religions, Islam and other beliefs.

With an **estimated population** of about 99 million in 2022, DR Congo is the fourth most populated country in Africa and the 15th most in the world, after India, China, United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, **Nigeria**, Brazil, Bangladesh, Russia, Mexico, **Ethiopia**, Japan, Philippines and **Egypt**, respectively. The country has one of the fastest growing populations in Africa and globally, with an annual population increase of 3.3% in 2022. This is above the average population growth rate for low-income Africa (2.9%), Africa (2.5%) and the world (0.9%) in the same year.

The country's rapid population growth has a significant impact on the well-being of its people, exacerbating its high rate of malnutrition, poor education and healthcare services. With a growing population and a very high number of dependents (people younger than 15 years old and older than 65) versus working-age people (15–64 years old), social conditions like poverty and hunger will increase as the effects of rapid population growth hit the poorest first and GDP per capita is reduced. The state's negligible provision of medical care — along with poverty, violence and endemic disease—has led to a low life expectancy of 62.5 years in 2022. This is below the estimated averages for low-income African countries (63.8 years) and Africa (65.9 years). DR Congo also has a very large youth bulge, with around 49% of its adult population aged 15 to 29 in 2022. By 2043, the proportion will only have declined to about 45%. Generally, a youth bulge above 40% is indicative of potential for instability.

DR Congo's population will increase by 73.6% between 2024 and 2043 to reach 164 million in the Current Path forecast. The working population (age 15–64 years old) will account for about 57% of the population in 2043. This can be a potential

source of growth provided the labour force is well-trained and sufficient jobs are created. The population of 15 years old and younger is expected to decline, constituting about 40% of the population in 2043, while the share of elderly people (65+ years) will be 3%.

Chart 3: Population distribution map, 2022

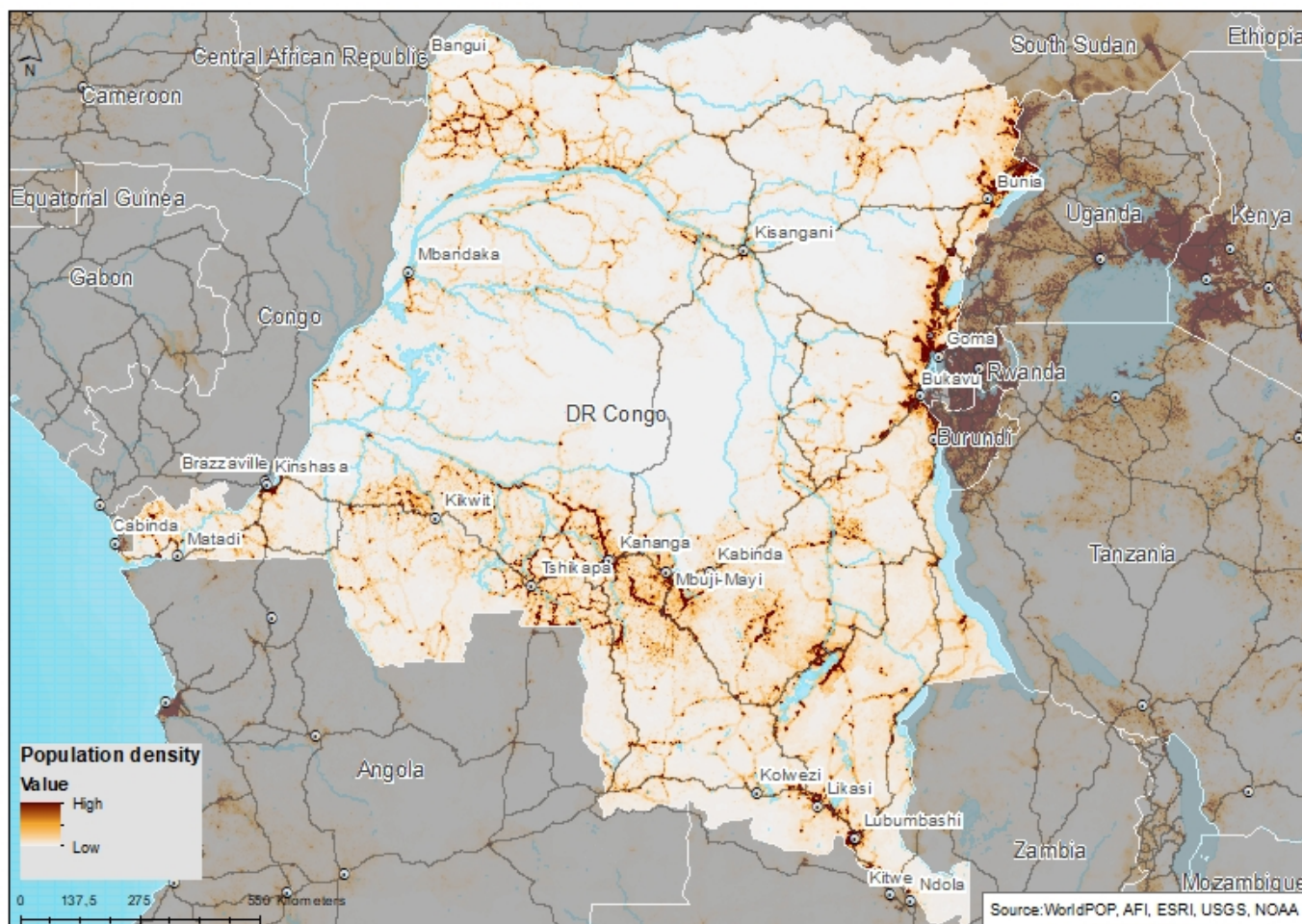


Chart 3 presents a population density map.

The population density of DR Congo was 0.44 people per hectare in 2022, which is comparable to the averages of low-income African countries (0.44 people per hectare) and the continent (0.48 people per hectare). In the Current Path forecast, the country's population density will remain below one inhabitant per hectare by 2043, which is on par with the projected averages for low-income African countries and the continent in the same year.

The country's population is concentrated on the plateaus, in the savannah near rivers and lakes. The north and the centre of the country, a domain of the jungle, are almost empty. The rural exodus, induced by factors such as avoiding conflict and its attendant risks as well as inadequate rural services, has swollen the population of the cities. The largest cities are Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, Kisangani and Bukavu.

Chart 4: GDP in MER and growth in the Current Path forecast, 1990-2043

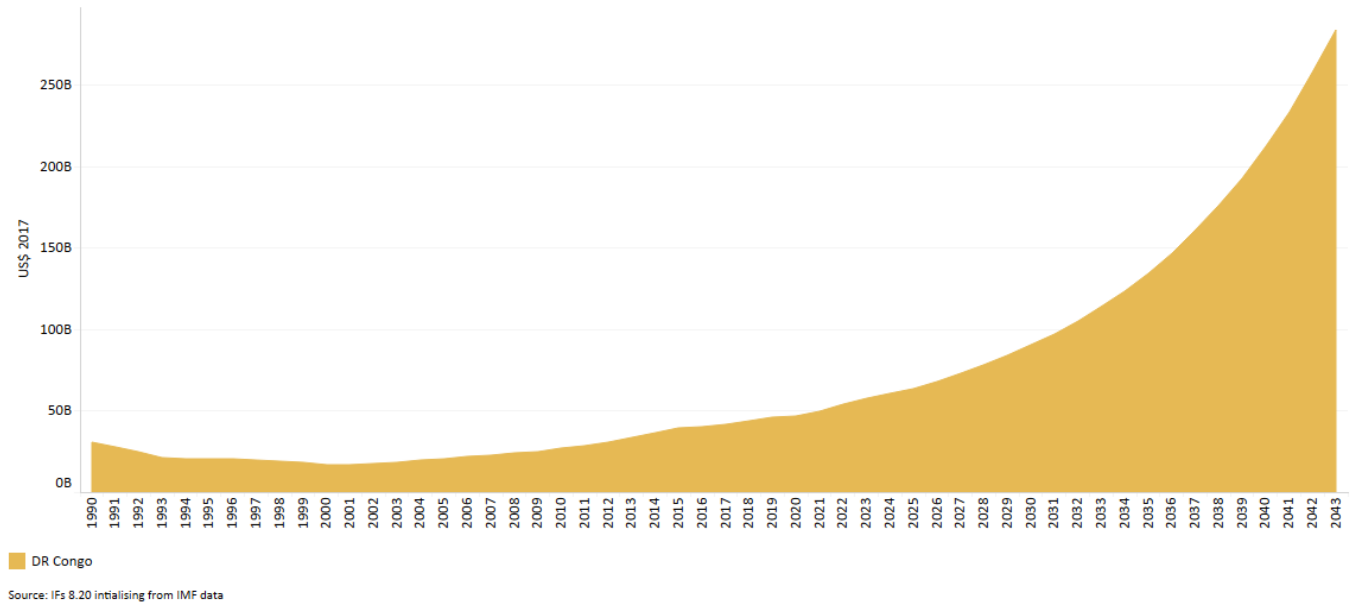


Chart 4 presents the size of DR Congo's economy from 1990 and a forecast to 2043 including the associated growth rate.

The Congolese economy was particularly hard hit by the series of violent conflicts in the 1990s. For instance, from 1990 to 2003, the size of the economy shrank by about 40%. The mining sector, which was the mainstay of the economy, collapsed.

Following the signing of an all-inclusive peace agreement in 2002, the transition government, led by Joseph Kabila, reengaged with international financial institutions leading to a resumption of support from the World Bank and the IMF. Several reforms and policies implemented under the auspices of the Bretton Woods Institutions, in conjunction with a rebound in post-war economic activity, served to control hyperinflation and revive economic growth. In 2002, after a recession that had lasted a decade, the country returned to growth.

Buoyed by rising commodity prices, DR Congo recorded an average growth rate of 7.9% from 2010 to 2015, compared to an average of 4.3% for sub-Saharan Africa over the same period. However, the subsequent cyclical fluctuations in commodity prices slowed the average growth dynamics to 3.3% from 2016 to 2019 and revealed the country's high exposure to commodity price shocks. During the COVID-19 pandemic year (2020), the country recorded a growth rate of 1.7%—a 2.8 percentage point drop relative to 2019. Overall, the GDP in 2020 increased from US\$44.9 billion in 2019 to US\$45.7 billion. This was an increase of about US\$784.8 million compared to an average increase of around US\$1.9 billion between 2016 and 2019.

In 2022, DR Congo's economy expanded by 8.9%, mainly driven by increased mining production and high global prices of commodity exports. The country is heavily dependent on commodity trade, particularly oils, copper, cobalt, tin, tungsten and tantalum. In the same year, the size of the economy was US\$49.4 billion, up from US\$42.7 billion in 2020. The hydrocarbon sector has dominated the economy. For the past 15 years, the share of the hydrocarbon sector has fluctuated around an average of 42% of GDP, the service sector about 33% of GDP, while agriculture, forestry and fishing represent 6% of GDP.

By 2043, the size of DR Congo's economy will grow to US\$259.8 billion. The country's current extractive

industry-driven growth model is fragile and holds little promise for improvements in livelihoods. Without a significant structural transformation of the economy, economic growth will continue to be at the mercy of commodity price shocks. The underinvestment in education, healthcare and physical infrastructure, as well as weak governance institutions, have underscored the limits of extractive industry-driven growth and the importance of **economic diversification** in DR Congo. With the expected decline in demand for fossil fuels from the global transition to a lower carbon economy, the country's growth model may have a limited time frame.

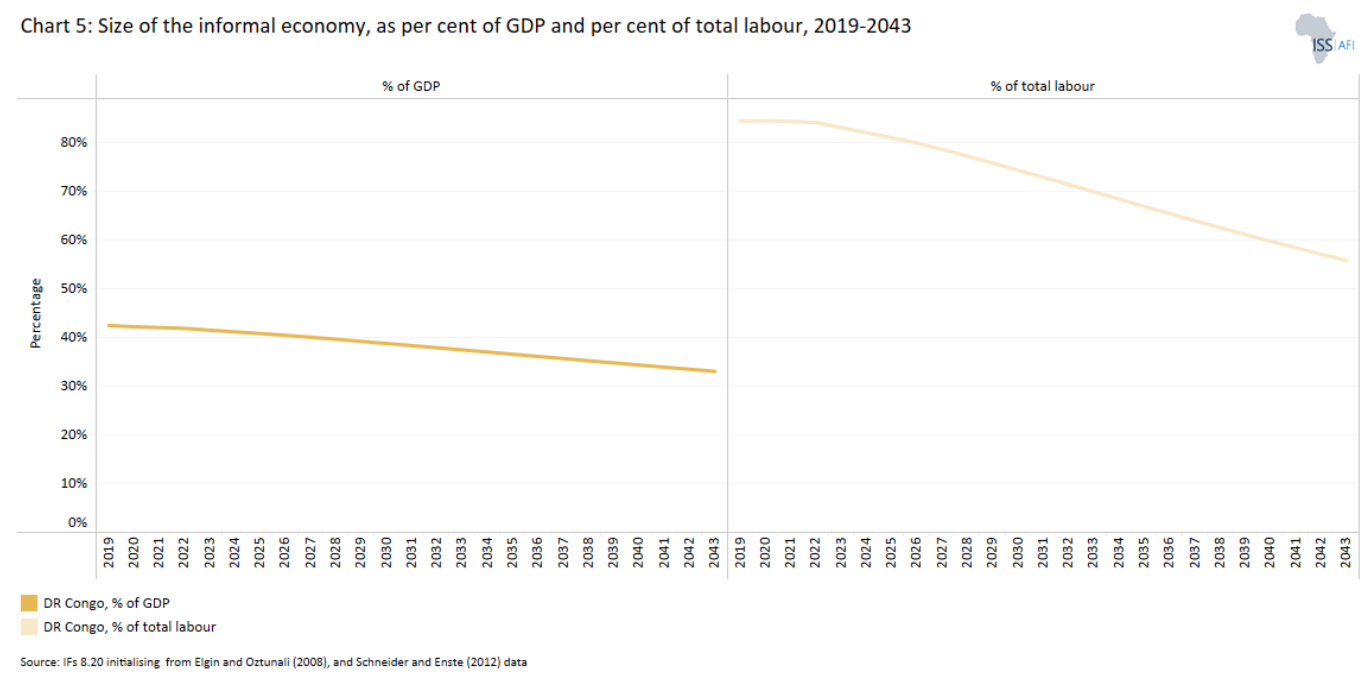


Chart 5 presents the size of the informal economy as a per cent of GDP and in absolute terms, as well as the per cent of total labour involved in the informal economy.

The informal sector is a crucial lifeline for many people in DR Congo. According to the country's Ministry of Labour, employment is dominated by the **informal sector**, which accounts for about 88.6% of total employment—59.7% in the agriculture sector and 28.9% in the non-agriculture activities.

In 2022, the size of the informal economy represented about 41.8% of the country's GDP, and by 2043 will decline significantly to 33%, which is above the averages of 26.6% and 24.6% for low-income African countries and Africa, respectively. Although the informal economy provides a safety net for the large and growing working-age population in the country, it impedes economic growth and hinders improved economic policies. Reducing informality will allow more people to benefit from better wages and redistributive measures. Therefore, DR Congo needs to reduce the size of its informal economy with the least friction possible by reducing the hurdles to registering a business, tackling corruption and improving access to finance.

Chart 6: GDP per capita in Current Path forecast, 1990-2043

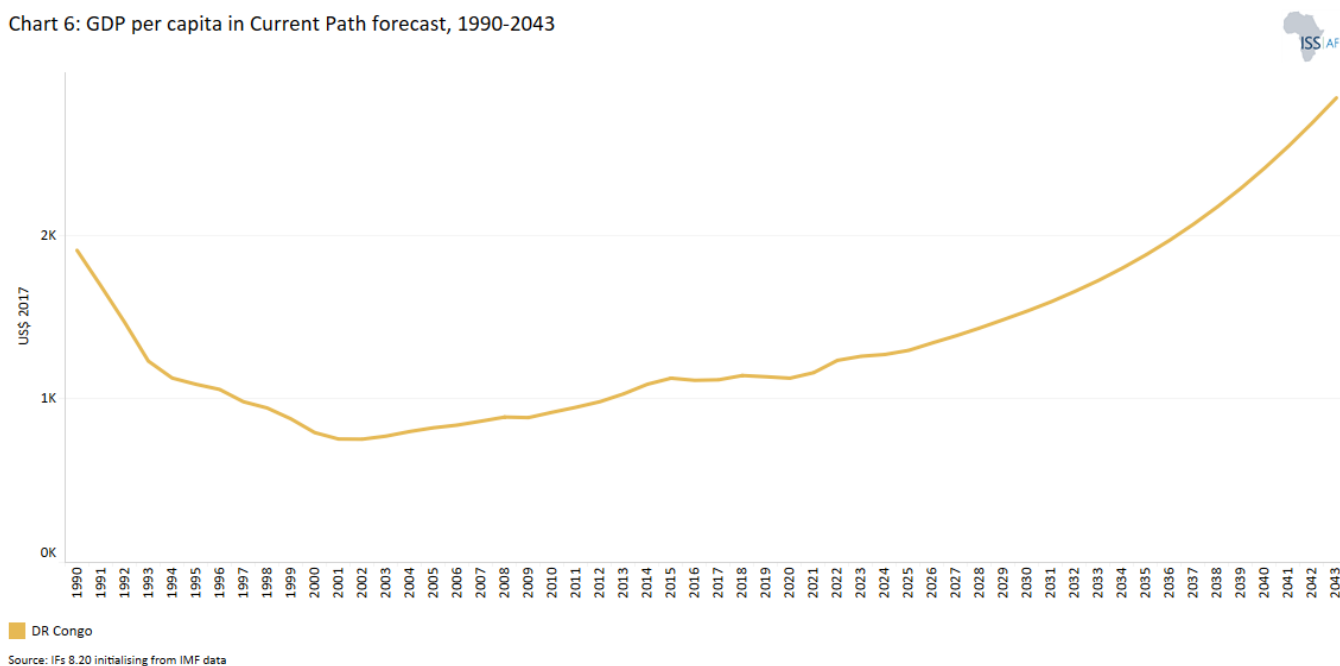


Chart 6 presents the average GDP per capita from 1990 and includes the Current Path forecast to 2043.

Although many of the charts in the sectoral scenarios also include GDP per capita, this overview is an essential point of departure for interpreting the general economic outlook of DR Congo. The country failed to fulfil any of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and remains a low-income country with one of the lowest GDP per capita in the world. The country ranked 179th of 191 countries on the 2021/2022 Human Development Index.

The series of violent conflicts in the 1990s have had a knock-on effect on economic growth and income. For instance, over the period 1990 to 2003, the GDP per capita declined to nearly 29% of its level at independence in 1960. In 2022, GDP per capita in DR Congo amounted to US\$1 133, equivalent to about 61.5% of the estimated African low-income countries average in the same year and about 42.2% less compared to its level in 1960.

The country's GDP per capita will increase to US\$2 605 in 2043, equivalent to 84.2% of low-income African countries' projected average in the same year.

Chart 7: Extreme poverty in Current Path as % of population and numbers, 2019-2043

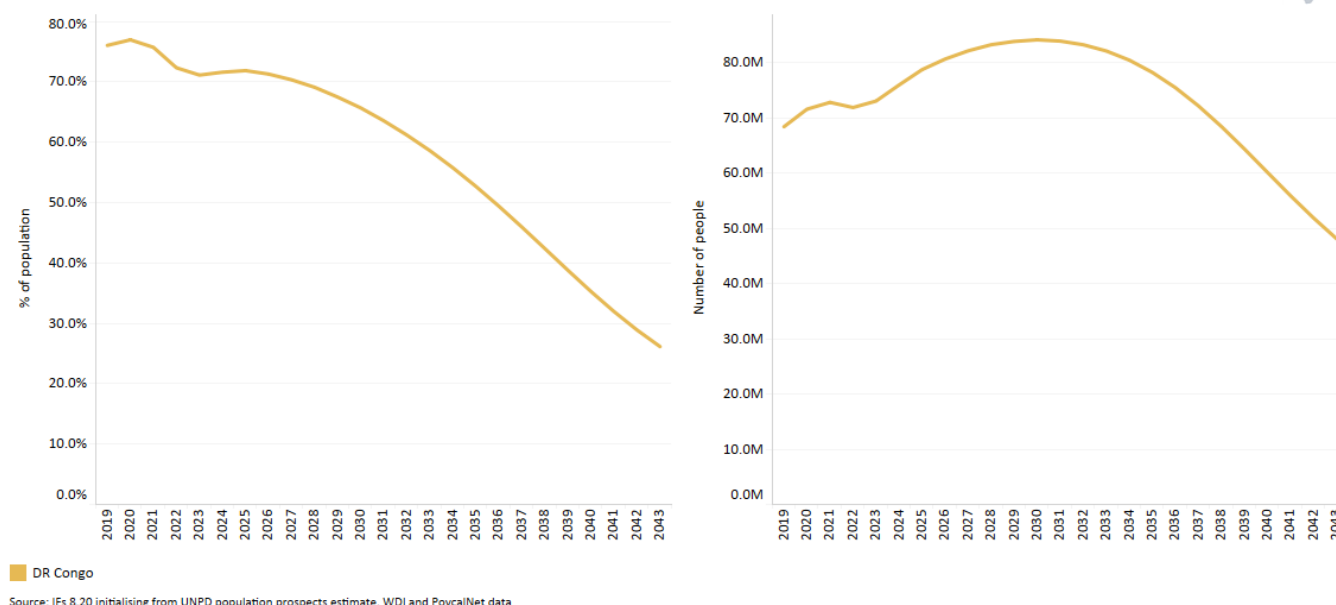


Chart 7 presents the number of people living in extreme poverty, also expressed as a per cent of the population.

In 2015, the World Bank adopted US\$1.90 per person per day (in 2011 prices using GNI), also used to measure progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 of eradicating extreme poverty. In 2022, the World Bank updated the US\$1.90 to US\$2.15 in 2017 constant dollars. They are:

- US\$3.20 for lower-middle-income countries, now US\$3.65 in 2017 values.
- US\$6.85 instead of US\$5.50 for upper-middle-income countries in 2017 values.
- US\$22.70 for high-income countries. The Bank has not yet announced the new poverty line in 2017 US\$ prices for high-income countries.

DR Congo is one of the five countries in the world with the most people living in extreme poverty, i.e. living on less than US\$2.15 per day. In 2022, about 72.3% of DR Congo's population, equivalent to 71.8 million people, lived in extreme poverty. Thus, approximately one out of four people who lived in extreme poverty in low-income African countries in 2022 lived in DR Congo, and nearly one out of seven in sub-Saharan Africa lived in DR Congo. The country has the second highest number of extremely poor people in Africa after Nigeria and is unlikely to make significant progress towards the SDG target of reducing extreme poverty to less than 3% by 2030. Ways for DR Congo to reduce extreme poverty requires rapid, inclusive economic growth as well as educating children, ensuring basic healthcare, empowering women and preventing child marriage.

In the Current Path forecast, in 2043, DR Congo will be home to the highest number of extremely poor people in low-income Africa and the second highest in Africa, with 48.1 million people (about 26.1% of the population) living on the US\$2.15 per day poverty line.

Factors such as armed conflicts, poor governance, high fertility rates, infrastructure shortages and low schooling completion are some of the root causes of the poverty for millions of Congolese people. Policymakers in DR Congo should

make growth more inclusive by integrating the most vulnerable segments of the population, especially women, into the economy and enhancing human capital formation to meet the needs of the labour market and hence create more gainful jobs and accelerate poverty reduction.

Chart 8: National Development Plan



**RÉPUBLIQUE
DÉMOCRATIQUE
DU CONGO**



**PLAN
NATIONAL
STRATÉGIQUE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
2019-2023**



The long-term development vision of the **National Development Plan** (2019–2023) of DR Congo is to overcome poverty by building a diversified economy and through inclusive growth to become a middle-income economy

The plan includes five pillars for improvement:

1. Human capital development, social and cultural development
2. Strengthening good governance, restoration of state authority and consolidation of peace
3. Consolidation of economic growth, diversification and transformation of the economy
4. Land use planning, reconstruction and modernisation of infrastructure
5. Environmental protection, fight against climate change, sustainable development and balance

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About the authors

Dr Blessing Chipanda joined the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme in January 2023. Before joining the ISS he worked as an assistant lecturer/research assistant at the University of Pretoria, Department of Economics. He is particularly interested in tasks within the wider realm of international trade, development economics, public policy, monetary policy, and econometric modelling. Equally interested in economic and socio-economic activities that impact social welfare. Blessing has a PhD in economics from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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