DR Congo

DR Congo: Conclusion

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Chart 29: Recommendations

Chart 29 summarises the findings and policy recommendations for DR Congo.

This report outlines the current development challenges faced by DR Congo and the strategic opportunities to put the country on a path of inclusive and sustainable growth.

The analysis revealed that despite some signs of improvement, DR Congo is still facing huge development challenges of chronic poverty and underdevelopment, influenced by political instability and ineffective governance. Significant progress is yet to be made in diversifying its economy away from commodity exports which are at the mercy of highly volatile global commodity markets. The Current Path (or business as usual) analysis shows that the country will fail to achieve most of the 2030 SDG targets as it failed to achieve any MDGs by 2015. Unemployment is massive, and millions of Congolese continue to live in extreme poverty, worsened by the impacts of climate change.

The Current Path analysis and the scenario simulations revealed that lack of industrialisation, bad governance, infrastructure shortage, low agricultural productivity, limited export diversification and low stock and quality of human capital are some of the key factors holding back the country's developmental progress. Tackling these issues is crucial to set the country on a path of sustained growth and shared prosperity. Given DR Congo’s complex development challenges, the government must take decisive, targeted actions on the priority policies outlined below:

Agriculture productivity and food security

- Boost agricultural production and productivity by investing in productivity-enhancing technologies and facilitating access to high-yield, disease- and drought-resistant seedlings, fertiliser and credit guarantees for farmers and supporting R&D activities in building resilience and agricultural productivity.

- Protect agricultural production and commercialisation from weather events by investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, particularly the rural road network to facilitate the flow of agricultural produces from the farmers to the market. Other examples are solar power that facilitates irrigation and cooling of food storage could be adopted.

Economic diversification and industrialisation

- Promote downstream beneficiation and undertake reforms in the business environment aimed at reducing business costs and risks by improving the quality of business regulation. Simplifying administrative procedures and formalities makes it easier for firms, specifically small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to do business, to test new ideas and to grow.

- Encourage citizens to build an entrepreneurial mindset to shift labour from the large informal sector to businesses in the formal economy.

Infrastructure development

- Address infrastructure deficits which undermine private sector development in the country. A reliable electricity supply can be provided through mini-grid and off-grid solutions using renewable energy.

- Improve rural transport networks with reliable and all-weather rural road access to facilitate agricultural commercialisation.

- The government should remedy the infrastructure deficit by first fixing and maintaining its existing infrastructure. This includes the full re-opening of the Congo River, as well as the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads and rail, electricity, safe water supply, and ICT infrastructure.

Education, Health and Demographics

- Curriculums need to be reviewed in collaboration with the private sector and industrialists to match with the needs of the labour market.

- Government must roll out the free primary education programme along with the improvement in access to technical and vocational education, and higher education, especially in sciences and engineering to enhance the country's capabilities to absorb new knowledge and technologies.

- Investment in education should go hand-in-hand with the improvement in the quality of the health system and access to affordable healthcare.

- Teachers in primary and secondary schools should be properly trained or removed from the education system..

- Invest in human capital and skills development. Availability of skilled labour at a reasonable cost and in abundant supply should be one of the key drivers for FDI attraction and industrialisation

- Continue the roll-out of modern contraceptives by focusing on the underserved, younger, more rural population groups where contraceptive awareness-raising campaigns and uptake remain low.

Good Governance

- The promotion of good governance and strong institutions should be at the centre of government actions. This will increase the country's ability to mobilise domestic revenues and hence, improve the government's capacity and the quality of spending. Stronger institutions, particularly oversight and monitoring, are crucial for DR Congo to harness fully its immense natural wealth and to improve the living standard of the population. The government must publish all new mining contracts and the audits of state-owned enterprises, including the details regarding its resource agreements with foreign governments. Parliament must be provided with detailed and full access to government spending including within the security agencies. The independence of the judiciary must be confirmed as a key resource to combat corruption.

By implementing these strategies, DR Congo can harness its vast resources to forge a prosperous future for its citizens. However, as DR Congo continues to implement these ambitious plans, it will be crucial to maintain a balanced approach that promotes economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability and equitable wealth distribution.

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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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