



**WAR**  
child



**DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF CONGO**  
FACTS AND FIGURES

2019

TOTAL POPULATION	<b>83.3 MILLION</b>
TOTAL POPULATION UNDER 18	<b>37 MILLION</b>

CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CONFLICT	<b>7.8 MILLION</b>
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Country budget	<b>\$4,105,710</b>
Unrestricted funding required	<b>\$907,333</b>
Anticipated Total Beneficiary number for 2019	<b>17,000</b>

**NATIONAL CONTEXT**

Ever since the country gained independence from Belgium in 1960, it has been afflicted by violent conflict. Political divisions and violence between ethnic groups resulted in a civil war between 1997-2003, claiming millions of lives. The war officially ended in 2003 but fighting continued with armed groups spreading violence across the country.

Conflict within the country has been further exacerbated by Joseph Kabila's (the deeply unpopular president) refusal to step down from power at the end of his second term, as constitutionally mandated, in December 2016. This has led to profound economic and political chaos and violence.

Over the last couple of years, the situation in DRC has continued to deteriorate, with dire consequences for children and young people.

## THE SITUATION FOR CHILDREN

The DRC has experienced a humanitarian crisis for so many years that the acute nature of the situation is often overlooked. Chronic malnutrition affects more than 6 million children, compromising their development, and nearly 40% of girls are married before the age of 18, often resulting in their leaving school, suffering abuse and carrying risky pregnancies. Ongoing insecurity in some regions, including destruction and looting of schools and health centres, has had a major impact on access to basic goods and services for children.

It is estimated that there are 40,000 street children in the DRC with the number continuously rising. This leaves them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and violence. Armed groups are also still active across the country and are responsible for killing civilians, rapes and forced recruitment of children.

## OUR VISION

In light of the gradually worsening situation in the DRC, the protection of children is very likely to fall at the bottom of the agenda of government and main stakeholders in the country. War Child UK aims to become the technical lead agency for the delivery of effective Child Protection interventions. We will also be expanding our geographic coverage to reach more vulnerable children across the country.

## WHAT WE DO

We work with authorities and communities in the DRC to put child protection laws into effect and prevent violence against children. This includes running a free helpline to provide rapid support to children at risk and making sure their rights are respected by law enforcers. We're also building the general capacity of the Congolese child protection system, strengthening detection, prevention and response to child neglect and exploitation.

In parallel, we work with local partners and community networks to run campaigns, raising public awareness and informing children, parents, community leaders and officials about child protection issues. One focus is juvenile justice to make sure children's rights are respected in the legal process and that conditions are improved in detention. Another key area is supporting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, facilitating their reintegration and preventing stigma and further violence.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

### Operationalisation of the child helpline for children victims of abuse in Goma and Kinshasa

Since 2013 War Child has established a toll-free Child Helpline in Goma (117), enabling children to access advice and care when they do not know where to turn for help. The Helpline's coverage has now been extended to Kinshasa with the construction of a new call centre and the creation of a new toll-free number (116), and to some of the most remote territories of North Kivu (i.e. Rutshuru, Masisi) where armed groups remain particularly active and the protection of children and their exploitation is constantly at risk. Additionally, War Child UK continues to ensure better coordination of child protection activities and to strengthen the means of responding to abused, neglected and exploited children.

### Project on sexual and gender-based violence and women's health in the Great Lakes region

The Helpline is also being used as a referral system for the most severe cases in a project focusing on capacity strengthening of local NGOs. The project provides trainings and coaching on child protection and legal support (with our partner American Bar Association) to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in North Kivu to help them to get justice, recover from their experience and prevent stigma.

# Project to support restorative justice for children in conflict with the law in Kinshasa

This project aims to make sure that children’s rights are respected in the legal process and are referred to health and rehabilitation centres (i.e. CSK in Kinshasa), where they are supported towards reintegration.

# Psychosocial support and reintegration of children with their families in Kasai province, Tshikapa territory

War Child UK aims to provide enhanced protection from indiscriminate violence to youth and vulnerable children in Kasai - mainly those who are unaccompanied, separated from their families of recently taken out of the militia. The project includes finding temporary foster care families and safe spaces, offering psychosocial support, and providing them with opportunities to return to education or professional training. We trace their family back and reunite them together wherever possible.

## HOW CAN WAR CHILD AUSTRALIA HELP

War Child Australia will help by contributing much needed funding to strengthen War Child UK’s implementation of programmes in the DRC in a context where the pool of donors interested in the region is shrinking.

