

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund



Topic: Protecting Children's Fundamental Rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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INTRODUCTION

UNICEF, (United Nations Children's Fund), a special program that originally began as the UN children Emergency Fund for mothers and their children. It was backed by the UN General Assembly, which gave it as a fast aid. The aid included food and medical care for the population affected by World War II. A major UN agency made sure to keep the rights of children globally as it functions today. It aims to make sure every child has everything necessary to grow and realize their potential, especially the population of children who are too out of reach, UNICEF works with the help of country offices across 190 countries and territories.

"The" UNICEF was officially established on December 11, 1946.

UNICEF was founded to help children who suffered in the wake of World War II by providing essential assistance, including food, shelter, and medical care, particularly in Europe and Asia. Over time, its reach was broadened. It eventually expanded to encompass worldwide support for children's rights and general welfare.

UNICEF addresses a wide range of global problems related to children's survival, such as education, health, and nutrition.

UNICEF's key roles include partnering with non-governmental organizations to achieve the best results possible, advocating for children's rights, education, health, and nutrition. UNICEF spreads and creates strategic knowledge, supports advocacy and policy development, and ensures the security of its institutional and financial

The topic refers to the problematic situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, specifically on the issue of women and children. There has been barely any action taken to solve this plight, especially towards the eastern regions. In January 10th of the year 2009 reaffirmed its commitment to international child rights by enacting a child protection law which defined "child in an exceptional situation" as any person below 18 years of age that is found in a situation of armed conflict,

tensions or civil troubles, natural catastrophes or a situation of sensible and prolonged degradation of socio-economic conditions (Article 2 (5)). However the country's insufficient law enforcement makes it hard to follow the child protection law. Due to this, women and children keep suffering on a daily basis.

The problem dates back to 1885 and 1960 in the colonial era. Children in those years did not have the opportunity to study nor healthcare services. This problem is ongoing and until this day it's estimated that approximately 3,500 children still have something to do with armed groups.

It is relevant due to the human rights violations towards women and children, which involves forced labor, sexual violence and forced minor use in armed conflicts. Beyond the humanitarian consequences this conflict does not maintain nationally, but also internationally threatening the peace and security. The conflict affects the DRC's natural resources by exploiting them; resources used worldwide.

There is still a serious humanitarian and human rights crisis in the DRC. Violent disputes between armed groups over land and natural resources lead to widespread poverty, insecurity, and mass displacement. Despite the existence of protective laws, their enforcement is hampered by corrupt practices and poor government. The population also suffers from hunger, disease, and a lack of basic public services, deepening the country's ongoing crisis.

By putting screening procedures in place and promoting reintegration, the UN has collaborated with the Congolese government to bolster efforts against the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers. By seeking justice for those accountable for serious crimes, including sexual violence and child recruitment.

Yes, UNICEF has addressed this issue in various forms. UNICEF has consistently worked on protecting children's rights in the DRC. Its focus includes preventing child exploitation, ensuring access to healthcare and education, and delivering humanitarian aid.

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

The pre-colonial and post-colonial histories of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are largely to blame for the current problem. Before colonization, this region was based on complex political systems, most seen in the southern parts of the country. Among these regions were the Kongo Kingdom in the west and the Luba-Lunda states in the east. These societies operated under centralized authority, supported by symbolic leadership and military power. The opinions or criticism of their people were ignored most of the time, along with the constant violation of the human rights of the

citizens, which led to disputes starting to erupt into civil wars. With the arrival of the slave trade between the 15th and 17th centuries, new sources of conflict emerged.

Conflicts between Congolese military and rebel groups led by M23 rapidly escalated in early 2025, and M23 took control of Goma, the capital of the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda, the M23 militia's primary backer, supported the M23 militia's assault in the eastern DRC with three to four thousand soldiers on the ground. Thousands of inhabitants, many of whom had previously been moved inside the region, descended as the city of Goma did. M23 declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities on February 4. The UN estimates that 900 people died in the attack on Goma, whereas the Congolese government claims that 2,000 people died. Since the late 1990s, Rwanda has been looking for land and valuable natural resources in the eastern Congo, and the most recent organization it supports is M23. Goma's ascent exacerbated political instability throughout the nation, notably in Kinshasa, the capital, which had escalated following the DRC's December 2023 general elections. The DRC is one of the most important and dangerous humanitarian emergencies, with one million Congolese seeking refuge abroad and 21 million in the nation in dire need of food, medicine, and other aid.

Approximately six million people have died as a result of war in the eastern DRC since 1996. Following the 1994 Rwandan Massacre, in which ethnic Hutu extremists killed around a million minority ethnic Tutsis, the first Congolese conflict (1996–1997) began. Nearly two million Hutu refugees crossed the Congo border during and after the slaughter, mostly settling in camps in the North and South Kivu areas. Hutu radicals were a small portion of the Rwandan refugees who arrived in the DRC and began organizing armed groups there. As international governments began to position themselves and Tutsi fighters prepared to face Hutu forces, tension increased.

The conflict recently became more intense, but the peak came in 1998 when relations between Kigali and Kinshasa deteriorated and the Second Congo War broke out. In order to lessen the notion that Rwanda possessed excessive power over the Congolese government, Kabila denied claims that Rwanda had contributed to the war's security and his installation. Kabila began expelling ethnic Tutsis from his government and took steps to lessen Rwanda's military clout in the eastern DRC. Globally, it became clear by the end of the 1990s that targeted attacks on Hutu groups during the First Congo War, primarily by Kagame's forces constituted war crimes. This growing international consensus was detrimental to the new Kabila administration.

Both political and armed actors' involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has had a significant impact on the protection of children's fundamental rights. The DRC's government is notable among political actors for having ratified important international

agreements like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Important national laws have also been passed by it, such as the 2016 amended Family Code and the 2009 Child Protection Law. The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), the country's army, has been linked to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, sometimes in coordination with non-state militias, in spite of these legal commitments.

In the DRC, the illicit exploitation of natural resources has severely harmed children's rights and been a primary cause of conflict for many years. Rich reserves of gold, cobalt, diamonds, and coltan are also found in the nation; these minerals are used in electronics and cell phones, and their illegal mining and sale has led to violent clashes between armed groups. The money raised fuels violence, sustaining the region's long-standing conflict. As a result, they put citizens, particularly children, at greater risk from the environment. Numerous factors directly affect children. Children are regularly coerced by militaries to work as mineworkers, couriers, and soldiers.

Today, UNICEF and its partners released new data showing the terrible toll that the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken on children. During this time through 2023, armed groups recruited or used 1,545 children, primarily for roles as messengers, porters, or combatants. Over 500 children experienced sexual violence as a result of the conflict, and over 900 children were killed or maimed in violent attacks. There has also been widespread displacement as a result of the violence. More than 3 million children had been displaced by the end of 2023, primarily in the eastern regions of the country of Ituri, South Kivu, and North Kivu. These children are frequently held captive in dangerous, overcrowded camps with little access to clean water, food, healthcare, and education. UNICEF's reaction: Delivering immediate aid, reunifying families, providing psychosocial care and support, and promoting the safety and reintegration of children in armed conflict are all part of UNICEF's response. However, the world's response is insufficient and the crisis is too big to hold onto him for very long.

Natural resource exploitation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has stoked a horrific conflict that continues to gravely violate children's fundamental rights. According to UNICEF, the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has gotten significantly worse in 2025, with major consequences for millions of children. The number of serious violations against children has tripled since January 2025. These crimes include kidnappings, sexual abuse, murder, disability, and the enlistment and exploitation of children by armed groups. In just the first two months of the year, armed actors recruited over 400 children. In January alone, there were 572 rape cases reported, 170 of which involved children, indicating a sharp rise in sexual violence. The rate of kidnappings and killings has

also increased alarmingly; attacks on hospitals and schools have increased twelvefold over the previous year. Additionally, the conflict has led to mass migration. More than 850,000 people have been displaced in South Kivu alone, with nearly half of them being children. Since the beginning of 2025, over 120,000 children have been relocated. Around 3.5 million children are thought to be displaced nationwide; they occasionally reside in overcrowded refugee camps with little access to clean water, food, healthcare, and education. A lot of disruptions have occurred in education. Nearly 800,000 children have been impacted by the closure of more than 2,500 schools in North and South Kivu. Due to the conflict and instability, there are currently over 1.6 million children in Eastern DRC who are not attending school, and this number is constantly rising. The health system in many of the impacted areas has fallen apart. Children who have been displaced are at risk for cholera, measles, and other avoidable illnesses, and medical facilities have been destroyed or damaged. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of medical care and psychosocial support, which makes kids more vulnerable to emotional and physical trauma. UNICEF has been expanding its emergency response by providing emergency kits, family reunification services, psychological counseling, and healthcare to homeless children. Even with these efforts, the disaster's scope is astounding. UNICEF continues to call on the international community to provide humanitarian assistance right away and to put pressure on all conflicting parties to uphold the rights of children. Without prompt action, millions of children in the Democratic Republic of Congo would continue to endure the horrific consequences of a conflict driven by resource exploitation.

Humanitarian Crisis:

Numerous fundamental rights are being violated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which suggests that children's rights are being violated. Children are frequently coerced into serving as soldiers, subjecting them to abuse and violence. Their survival and health are negatively impacted by their lack of access to clean water, healthcare, and a healthy diet. Many children's right to an education is violated because of the ongoing conflict, which keeps them from attending school. Many children lose the care and protection they require when they are taken from their families. In general, children are unable to grow and develop normally due to the violence and instability, which violates their fundamental rights as guaranteed by international law.

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serious violations against children has tripled since January 2025. These crimes include kidnappings, sexual abuse, murder, disability, and the enlistment and exploitation of children by armed groups. In just the first two months of the year, armed actors recruited over 400 children. There has been a sharp rise in sexual violence; in January alone, 572 rape cases were reported, 170 of which involved children. Murders and kidnappings have also increased at startling rates; attacks on hospitals and schools have increased twelvefold over the previous year. The conflict has also led to mass migration. In South Kivu alone, more than 850,000 people have been displaced, nearly half of whom are children. Beginning in early 2025, over 120,000 children have been relocated. Around the nation, an estimated 3.5 million children are displaced; they occasionally reside in overcrowded refugee camps with little access to clean water, food, healthcare, and education. There have been many disruptions to education. Nearly 800,000 children have been impacted by the closure of more than 2,500 schools in North and South Kivu. Due to the conflict and instability, there are currently over 1.6 million children in Eastern DRC who are not attending school, and this number is constantly rising. The health system in many of the impacted areas has fallen apart. Children who have been displaced are at risk for cholera, measles, and other avoidable illnesses, and medical facilities have been destroyed or damaged. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of medical care and psychosocial support, which makes kids more vulnerable to emotional and physical trauma. UNICEF has been expanding its emergency response by providing emergency kits, family reunification services, psychological counseling, and healthcare to homeless children.

- How has this been reflected in the international community? The violation of children's rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has prompted a strong response from the international community. Organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children provide food, medical attention, education, and psychological counseling to affected children. The United Nations manages peacekeeping efforts to protect civilians and maintain order in conflict areas. Action incentives and global awareness of the situation aid in protecting children. There are also programs to help child soldiers leave armed groups and return to normal life. In addition, certain governments have penalized those responsible for harming children. However, constant conflict makes it hard to completely protect children, so continued international assistance is essential.

Children and families in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have suffered greatly as a result of internal displacement. When families are displaced by violence and conflict, they often lose access to basic necessities like food, clean water, shelter, and healthcare. Displaced children are more likely to experience psychological trauma, illness, and malnourishment as a result of the difficult and unstable circumstances. Many children who are orphaned or

separated from their families are the targets of abuse, exploitation, and recruitment by armed groups. Additionally, schools in war zones or displacement camps are frequently inaccessible or dangerous, which disrupts children's education. Internal displacement violates their fundamental rights by compromising the safety and stability that children and families require in order to grow and thrive as a whole.

The international community and government are addressing this displacement through military action against armed groups, participation in peace negotiations to seek ceasefires, and collaboration with international organizations to provide humanitarian aid for displaced people, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has addressed internal displacement. The international community has supported these initiatives by donating food, healthcare, and education through institutions like the UN and the European Union. Additionally, peacekeeping missions, such as those of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have been employed to stabilize conflict areas and protect civilians. Additionally, agencies like the UNHCR have called for increased funding to assist internally displaced people and refugees. However, there are still significant challenges. Many humanitarian efforts are underfunded, with only a small part of the necessary resources available.

Because of the conflict and displacement, girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo face more difficulties than boys. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, girls have experienced the effects of the war and displacement in a different way than boys; they face unique and frequently more challenging obstacles. They are more likely to experience forced marriage, sexual abuse, and other forms of gender-based violence. Displacement frequently hinders girls' access to education more than it does for boys because families may prioritize the education of boys or keep girls at home for safety reasons. In an effort to support their families, girls may also be coerced into early pregnancy or household chores. These factors, which impact the conflict and displacement, are especially harmful to girls and violate their rights to safety, education, health, and development.

Conflict, violence, and displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have significant and long-lasting effects on children's development. Children affected by these conditions may experience physical health problems as a result of malnutrition, mishaps, and limited access to medical care. Many people suffer from psychological trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can harm their emotional health and ability to build relationships based on trust. Many children miss important learning opportunities as a result of school disruptions, which restricts their future opportunities and

skill development. Due to social isolation, stigma, and a lack of family support, children may struggle to integrate into their environment. These cumulative effects hinder children's overall growth and ability to lead healthy, productive adult lives.

Education & Health Access:

The ongoing civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made it difficult for children to receive healthcare and education. Violence has resulted in the destruction, closure, or burning of numerous schools, making it difficult or impossible for children to attend classes. Insecurity can sometimes prevent children, especially girls, from going to school safely, even when they are still open. Because families move frequently and educational facilities in camps or temporary housing are occasionally limited or nonexistent, displacement also disrupts education. Access to healthcare is also significantly impacted. It is most affected in conflict zones and displacement camps, which frequently lack adequate medical facilities, supplies, and trained personnel. Children suffer from treatable diseases, malnourishment, and untreated wounds. Interrupting routine health care and immunization programs increases vulnerability to illness.

Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are most vulnerable are also the ones who are most at risk due to displacement and conflict. Given that they are compelled to fight and endure severe trauma, child soldiers are particularly vulnerable. Girls are more likely to experience early pregnancy, forced marriage, sexual abuse, and other forms of abuse, all of which can negatively affect their health and prospects in the future. Children who are orphaned or separated from their families are more vulnerable to abuse and abandonment because they do not have the protection and support that they need.

Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have suffered greatly as a result of sexual violence. Many children, especially girls, have been raped, sexually assaulted, and abused by armed groups and others benefiting from the conflict. Significant physical harm, unintended pregnancies, and the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS are all consequences of this violence. In addition to the physical injuries, survivors often endure profound emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, which can hinder their ability to trust people and participate in everyday social interactions. Additionally, social exclusion and stigmatization brought on by sexual violence make it more difficult for victims to get support, education, and

medical care. All things considered, sexual abuse violates children's rights to safety, health, and dignity and has a lasting detrimental impact on their lives.

The destruction of infrastructure in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has had a serious negative impact on child welfare, among other things. When schools, hospitals, water systems, and roads are destroyed or damaged, children lose access to essential services that they require to grow and thrive. Without operational schools, children lose out on education, which limits their options for the future. When healthcare facilities are destroyed, fewer children receive essential medical care, vaccinations, and treatments for illnesses or injuries. Children's health is impacted by waterborne infections, which are made more likely by damaged water and sanitation infrastructure. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure makes it more difficult for needy communities and displaced families to receive humanitarian aid.

CURRENT HAPPENINGS:

Early in 2025, the insurgency group M23, aided by Rwandan forces, took over important eastern cities like Goma and Bukavu. Children make up more than half of the 100,000 displaced people. The carnage claimed thousands of lives in a matter of days. The number of people living outside their homes has risen to over 8 million, the highest number ever recorded. Since aid workers are unable to easily enter hazardous areas, many displaced families face hardships, and some have been forced to return to damaged homes without basic amenities. Nearly 800,000 children's education has been disrupted by the closure of more than 2,500 schools in the eastern province. The health status is also critical in light of the cholera, measles, mopex, and malaria epidemics.

Children affected in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have received assistance from numerous organizations. UNICEF provides vital services like immunizations, nutrition, clean water, education, and protection from violence. War Child offers education, mental health care, and safe spaces for kids to recover from the trauma of war. Save the Children offers emergency relief as well as long-term programs focused on child protection, education, and healthcare, especially for displaced children. Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) provides outbreak response, maternal and child health support, nutritional treatment, and medical care. Congo With an emphasis on sustainable development, Aid collaborates with regional partners to offer assistance, healthcare, and education to orphanages.

Because of ongoing violence, displacement, and a lack of reliable data, it is challenging to pinpoint the exact percentage of children in danger in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). However, research from humanitarian organizations such as UNICEF indicates that a large number of children are in danger. It is estimated that between 40 and 50 percent of children in conflict-affected areas, particularly in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri, face direct or indirect risks to their safety and wellbeing. Abduction, sexual violence, displacement, lack of access to essential services like healthcare and education, forced recruitment by armed groups, and violence are some of these threats.

Forced recruitment and the use of children as soldiers by rebel groups and potentially state soldiers are among the violations that children are experiencing. Numerous children become victims of widespread sexual assault, abuse, mutilation, or even death. Access to education and medical care is seriously hampered by ongoing unrest and the destruction of schools and medical facilities. Furthermore, a lack of adequate protective mechanisms has made the severe psychological trauma experienced by children exposed to violence worse. These violations represent serious violations of international laws intended to protect children's rights. Despite efforts by the government and international organizations to put an end to these atrocities, there are still significant issues.

The DRC's violations of children's rights have prompted the international community to take a number of actions. Resolutions UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security and UNSCR 1612, which established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Serious Atrocities against Children in Armed Conflict, are noteworthy examples of significant tools. Leaders of armed groups like the M23 and FDLR, as well as other individuals and organizations found guilty of violations, have been punished. The UN peacekeeping force in the DRC, MONUSCO, has a dedicated Child Protection Unit that keeps an eye out for violations, supports integration initiatives, and assists in demobilizing child soldiers. In addition to the UN, international organizations that report atrocities and provide humanitarian aid include UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and Geneva Call. Development and humanitarian groups support initiatives for family reunification, healthcare, and education.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), grave abuses of children's fundamental rights, such as forced recruitment, sexual assault, kidnapping, and displacement, have a destabilizing effect outside of the nation's boundaries. The violence leads to massive humanitarian crises and mass displacement, creating refugee camps and internally displaced person settlements that can fuel further conflict by attracting children, spreading disease, and causing social disintegration. In conclusion, the severe abuse of children in the DRC not only

amounts to a humanitarian disaster but also directly contributes to the spread of conflict, instability in the region, and threats to international peace and security.

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo's ongoing violence and unrest hinder effective humanitarian access, threaten the government, and create an environment that allows armed groups to operate freely and continue recruiting and abusing children. Weak State Institutions and Governance The government struggles with limited capacity, corruption, and lack of authority over large areas, especially in conflict areas. Armed Group Proliferation: Peace negotiations are hampered by the proliferation of frequently antagonistic armed groups with shifting allegiances. Economic Distress: Extreme poverty forces families and children into dangerous situations, leads to child slavery, and attracts armed groups that offer protection or money. Lack of awareness and understanding of social and cultural norms.

The solution for DRC calls for a strategy. In order to prevent armed conflicts, inclusive political discourse and peace agreements involving all relevant parties are essential. The national army must be reorganized and made professional in order to prevent child enlistment and abuse. Law enforcement and child protection services would be enhanced by strong governance through the creation of accountable and transparent institutions, guaranteeing that those who commit crimes are held accountable. Supporting former child soldiers requires the implementation of efficient disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs. Involving local communities in changing social norms is crucial, in addition to raising awareness through local protection organizations. With continued assistance from the UN and humanitarian organizations, international cooperation is needed to resolve disputes across borders and promote peace initiatives.

The United Nations has frequently denounced the recruitment of child soldiers, sexual violence, and attacks on civilians; the Security Council, UNICEF, and the peacekeeping force MONUSCO have all denounced these actions. Additionally, regional peace initiatives were supported by the African Union. The European Union has backed child protection efforts, denounced violations of human rights, and imposed particular penalties on leaders of armed groups who are held responsible for crimes. The United States has imposed sanctions, supported humanitarian initiatives, and harshly denounced these abuses. The international community has put pressure on neighbors like Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi to stop funding armed groups and to take an active role in peace efforts. International NGOs such as Geneva Call, Amnesty International, Save the Children, and Human Rights Watch have also documented violations, increased awareness, and called for accountability.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS:

UN Security Council Resolutions:

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) was created by UNSCR 1612 to record serious abuses against children, including school attacks, sexual assault, and recruitment.

The importance of protecting women and girls in conflict areas is emphasized by UNSCR 1325, which focuses on women, peace, and security.

Resolutions also call for accountability from governments and armed groups and denounce the recruitment of child soldiers.

UN Peacekeeping Mission (MONUSCO)

A Child Protection Unit within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) does the following:

- Monitors child rights violations.
- Supports the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers.
- Collaborates with local authorities to prevent recruitment and protect schools and hospitals.

Sanctions on Individuals and Armed Groups

- Leaders of armed groups such as M23 and FDLR.
- Individuals found responsible for crimes against children, including recruitment, sexual violence, and attacks on civilians.

Humanitarian Aid and Child Protection Programs

Organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières, Congo Aid, UNICEF, Save the Children, and War Child have:

- Provided emergency aid, such as food, water, shelter, and medical attention.
- Reopened schools, constructed makeshift classrooms, and advocated for safe education.
- Offers survivors of violence medical attention as well as psychosocial support.
- Oversaw initiatives for former child soldiers' reintegration and family reunion.
- International Pressure and Advocacy

The USA, France, the UK, the Netherlands, and Australia are among the nations that have denounced the use of child soldiers and demanded that human rights abuses be looked into.

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other international campaigns have exposed violations and compelled parties to respect international law.

The EU and UNHCR have pushed for more humanitarian aid to aid displaced people, particularly children.

Efforts to Promote Regional Peace and Security

The African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have backed diplomatic initiatives and peacekeeping missions aimed at defusing the violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In order to stop the flow of weapons and stop outside assistance for militias, cross-border cooperation has been promoted.

United Nations bodies:

- UNICEF, (United Nations Children Fund) has consistently denounced attacks on institutions, sexual violence, and the enlistment of child soldiers. Actions: Provided family reunification services, shelter, and legal support to displaced children.
- MONUSCO, (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) monitors on child abuse. Actions: Aids in the disarmament of child soldiers and protects civilians, including children, during armed conflicts.
- OHCHR, (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) called for accountability and highlighted serious violations of children's rights. Actions: Looks into violations of human rights, offers technical assistance to human rights organizations, and supports abused children.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) denounced the destruction of schools and the use of education for military objectives have been denounced Actions: rehabilitating schools, promoting access to high-quality education, educating educators, and putting policies in place to stop gender-based violence in schools.

IGOs

- African Union. called for the protection of children and an end to the use of child soldiers. Actions: Works with the DRC government to implement child rights protocols, support peace initiatives and conflict resolution efforts.
- The European Union has backed calls for justice and voiced concerns about child exploitation. Actions: Provide funding for child protection and humanitarian assistance, and support improved RDC governance.

NGOs:

- Human Rights Watch has released in-depth reports on the use of child soldiers and violations committed by armed groups, and it pushes governments and international organizations for more robust measures.
- Save the Children provides health care, education, and child protection services, as well as family tracing for separated children.
- Humanium increases public awareness of children's rights and advocates for the abolition of child labor and violence.
- World Vision called for immediate action to protect vulnerable children in the DRC (Eastern), provided food, education, and protection programs, and collaborated with local communities to prevent recruitment into armed groups.
- Red Cross reunites families, provides medical care for injured children, and distributes emergency supplies to displaced families, offering water sanitation and psychosocial support.

BLOCK ANALYSIS:

- Democratic Republic of the Congo

Children's rights have been severely impacted by decades of armed conflict, especially in the eastern regions, where they have been displaced, sexually assaulted, and recruited as child soldiers. To address these issues, the government passed laws such as the 2016 Family Code and the 2009 Child Protection Law. Despite these efforts, enforcement is still weak due to ongoing instability and limited resources. The government has implemented rehabilitation and reintegration programs for affected children in collaboration with international partners such as UNICEF and MONUSCO. Significant challenges are brought about by the presence of numerous armed factions and political instability. The DRC does not receive a significant intake under international protection status because it is the source of refugees and displaced people rather than a host country.

- United States of America

The US has frequently denounced violations of children's rights in the DRC and has invested large sums of money in humanitarian aid, child safety programs, and conflict resolution efforts. The United States has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to the State Department and USAID for projects ranging from education to health care to the reintegration of former child soldiers. The DRC government has been repeatedly urged by the U.S. administration to strengthen child protection laws and hold violators accountable. It has imposed particular penalties on armed groups that have committed crimes. The United States collaborates with international organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children. The United States offers asylum to people fleeing conflict and persecution and takes in refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of its refugee resettlement programs.

- French Republic

France, historically associated with Central Africa, actively supports humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Initiatives for child protection and education are supported by French government contributions to regional NGO operations and international organizations like UNICEF. France has participated in diplomatic efforts to stabilize the region by urging Congolese authorities to improve their child protection initiatives. France collaborates with European Union missions and African partners. It welcomes Congolese refugees and provides integration support through its asylum program.

- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The UK has made financial commitments to healthcare, education, and protection projects in conflict areas and has been an outspoken advocate for children's rights in the DRC. The British government works through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to support NGOs and UN agencies. It has called on the DRC government to increase child protection enforcement and combat the recruitment of children by armed groups.

- People's Republic of China

China's engagement with the DRC is primarily economic and focuses on mining projects. China has provided funding for certain UN peacekeeping operations in the DRC, despite criticism for its lack of involvement in humanitarian crisis resolution. China typically does not accept a large number of Congolese refugees under its immigration regulations.

- Russian Federation

Arms sales and cooperation agreements are part of the Russian Federation's presence in the DRC, which is primarily tactical and military. Russia has shown political support for the Congolese government, but it is less active in providing humanitarian aid to children. Russia participates in a few international forums that address regional security. Congolese refugees are not frequently accepted there.

- South Africa

Africa is home to Congolese refugees who have fled conflict and plays a diplomatic role in the region. The South African government has supported regional peace initiatives and provides humanitarian aid. It collaborates on refugee protection and child welfare initiatives with humanitarian organizations such as the African Union and the UNHCR.

- Republic of Uganda

Uganda borders eastern DRC, and is home to millions of Congolese refugees. It grants asylum and humanitarian aid. The country brings healthcare like drinkable water, emergency attention, vaccines, etc. Uganda has donated \$2.5 million dollars in the year 2025 to assist with health, protection, water, food for refugees who just got somewhere safe. The government of Uganda usually keeps their doors open to refugees, even tho it admits the welcoming communities are under preasure, Uganda also suffers from a lack of resources.

- Republic of Rwanda

Africa serves as a diplomatic hub in the region and is home to Congolese refugees who have fled conflict. The South African government offers humanitarian assistance and has backed regional peace initiatives. It works with humanitarian agencies like the UNHCR and the African Union on child welfare and refugee protection projects. South Africa has also called on the DRC government to enhance governance and child protection. It has one of the biggest refugee settlements in the region.

- Canada

Canada has supported and helped the DRC's health, education, and child protection initiatives. Canada has donated CAD \$41 million to assist in humanitarian assistance, development and peace for the DRC. For example; it has also supported projects such as “Femmes et Adolescentes Mobilisées pour leur Santé” with CAD \$24.5 million. The Canadian government has denounced the scale of violence in the east of the DRC, spreading conscience about the situation. Canada works on projects with

organizations such as UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, etc. Canada does accept refugees but they have to follow the guidelines.

- The Kingdom of Sweden

The Kingdom of Sweden has been responsible for donating money to multiple health programs designed for mothers and children in the DRC. In 2017 Sweden donated \$6 Million dollars to UNICEF to improve the health of children and mothers in need by financing them vaccines, and medical attention for illnesses such as malnourishment, diarrhea, pneumonia, etc. The Kingdom of Sweden also helps rescuing kids from the war zones, armed groups and supports vulnerable communities. The government has expressed its cooperation with the DRC, it aims to improve the life conditions of vulnerable children and communities, also worrying about children and mothers, and nutrition. This country does have refugee policies and participates in European programs for refugees.

- Kingdom of Belgium

The Kingdom of Belgium has an ongoing project called “fight against impunity, protection” which was developed in the ONU offices. The Kingdom of Belgium has condemned the violence specifically in the eastern DRC, in Ituri and North Kivu, where armed men take over by murdering and raping. The need to bring those responsible to justice has been highlighted. Belgium cooperates with UNJHRO (The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office). Belgium just like The Kingdom of Sweden, participates in European programs for refugees. In December of the year 2024, a court in Belgium convicted the government of colonial-eras crimes against humanity which included taking biracial children and separate them from their families. A compensation was ordered.

- The Federal Republic of Germany

Germany donated €50 million to enforce the resilience especially from the east of DRC supporting the rural territories affected by the conflict with the help of the FAO, UNICEF and the WFP. The program seeks to help small agricultors, food security and other interventions. The government of Germany has talked about the importance of stabilizing the regions affected by the conflict, which would be reducing the vulnerability of the civil population (including women and children), Germany is also concerned about the weather and conflicts, so it helps strenghtening resilient communities. This country does have a few refugees in their charge.

- The Kingdom of Denmark

Denmark has contributed to the UNHCR funds with \$1.5 million dollars as part of its emergency situation of Congo. Denmark highlights the necessity of urgent financing for emergencies, the protection of the displaced, and the support for basic necessities such as: refugee, water, health,

protection of the vulnerable population. Denmark has not specified but there are a few refugees in their countries.

- The Commonwealth of Australia

Australia hasn't donated money but instead it has participated in projects for mother's health for refugees and their communities in the DRC. The government hasn't talked about the violation of rights of women and children but it keeps its general compromise to help refugees and humanitarian projects. Australia has worked with the UNHCR and health organizations to provide health care to baby refugees, mothers, and the displaced. Australia does accept refugees referred by the UNHCR even if their process is limited and regulated.

KEY POINTS:

Human Rights: Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.

Violation of Human Rights: According to the United Nations, a human rights violation occurs when actions by state or non-state actors abuse, ignore, or deny basic human rights laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This includes civil, political, cultural, social, and economic rights.

Generations of Human Rights: Classified human rights into three broad categories: First Generation – Civil and Political Rights (Liberty) Second Generation – Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Equality) Third Generation – Collective and Solidarity Rights (Fraternity)

Democracy: Means 'rule by the people'. An example of this is any system of government in which people vote their elected representatives into parliament.

Military Government: The government established by a military commander in conquered territory to administer the military law declared under military authority applicable to all persons in the conquered territory and superseding any incompatible local law

Ethnic Cleansing: Ethnic cleansing is the forced expulsion or systematic extermination of ethnic, racial, or religious groups from a given area, with the intention of making the region ethnically homogeneous.

Internal displacement: According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed groups.

Migration: The permanent change of residence by an individual or group; it excludes such movements as nomadism, migrant labour, commuting, and tourism, all of which are transitory in nature.

Refugee: A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence.

International Sanctions: Actions taken by national governments against other countries for political reasons, either unilaterally or multilaterally, without resorting to the use of force.

Humanitarian Aid: Humanitarian aid is used to relieve suffering during emergency situations (such as conflict, an earthquake, or a drought). Development aid goes to addressing ongoing issues that contribute to human suffering. Humanitarian aid usually directly goes to people.

Key Questions:

1. How does UNICEF contribute to the well being of children?
2. What effective measures can be implemented to stop violence against children?
3. How can accountability be guaranteed to those who violate the rights of the children?
4. How can education still be maintained even if the schools/institutes are destroyed?
5. How can the delivery of integrated services be coordinated for displaced children?
6. How can sustainable finances be ensured to address this escalating crisis?
7. How can the legal framework in the DRC be reformed and enforced to eliminate practices that violate human rights?

8. What improvements are needed in Justice systems to prosecute both non state armed groups and state actors such as MONUSCO peacekeepers or FARDC soldiers implicated in sexual violence and abuse?

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