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Democratic Republic of Congo, Malnutrition and Water Scarcity

**Malnutrition and Water Scarcity in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) holds over half of Africa’s water, yet thirty-three million constituents still lack access to clean drinking water. Only one in five people in the DRC have access to toilets. For the ones that don’t, the waste goes into the creeks and rivers. This further contaminates the water that these individuals are expected to use for drinking, cooking, and basic hygiene. In addition to the water issues, the DRC is also faced with some of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. Around five million deaths occur yearly among children under five years old; forty-five percent of these deaths stem from these children not having access to nutrient-dense food (Akilimali, 2022). It's projected that thirteen million people in the DRC will require immediate attention regarding the acute food insecurity that is assumed to occur through May.

Along with these children not having ample access to food, they are also being deprived of medical services. Malnutrition can affect the function of every organ system. With limited disease treatment offered, this can become a very large issue for the individuals who reside in this country. Studies show that nine percent of children under five months old aren't receiving the minimum acceptable diet to keep them alive and healthy.

Although the DRC holds the majority of water in Africa, there is still an immense amount of individuals that are lacking a clean water source (HTScongo, 2022). This issue is in turn causing people to stop practicing basic hygiene. Considering they have no access to healthcare, this can be detrimental to the individuals there. Women and their children walk miles with buckets to retrieve water from creeks and streams, and this is the water they are expected to use for all of their needs. The first thing it is used for is drinking water. It has been shown the water they get from these sources has been giving them deadly diseases, such as cholera (World Health Organization, 2022).

Cholera is a disease that can kill a person within hours if left untreated. Cholera usually stems from a lack of sanitation along with a lack of clean drinking water. The Democratic Republic of Congo is suffering from a variety of illnesses with a lack of resources to treat them. DRC contracts around one hundred-eighty-nine thousand cases of cholera per year, with ninety-five thousand of those resulting in death (World Health Organization, 2022).

In 2011 a program called *We Are Water* raised around twenty thousand euros in an attempt to make clean water accessible to the constituents of the DRC (Mendez, 2020). This program successfully gave twenty thousand people from thirty different villages access to drinking water, along with being able to practice basic hygiene. This provided a cleaner environment for the villages that received these newly acquired resources. This program was hoping to slow the cholera epidemic. As for the other villages that did not receive this attention, they are still suffering from immense resource depletion, along with longing for access to basic human resources.

Conflicts in several provinces such as Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, have facilitated the spread of various waterborne illnesses. As displaced individuals arrive and reside in host communities that already have low access to clean water, the pressure on the resource issue further increases. Stretching resources comes at a detrimental cost.

The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Analysis projects that around thirteen million people in the DRC will require emergency assistance acquiring food and that this country will likely face even worse levels of acute food insecurity. The thing about this country is that they already possess the immanent adequacy to attain a sufficient level of food production; if they ever come to acquire the education and resources needed to attain this, they could even extend this to surrounding countries and help them with the issues they are facing as well.

One of the main issues regarding the DRC not using the fertile land they already have is mostly due to the lack of funding required to carry out that project. They would require an investment in rural development, and for the conflict in the eastern DRC to calm down for them to be able to become self-sufficient in their production. While the DRC does receive a certain amount of funding, only forty-one percent of the humanitarian funding goes towards agricultural development.

Some of the issues that have arisen for this country stemmed from the conflict that occurred in 2019 and 2020. This included displacement and localized flooding that furthermore contributed to the below-average harvests. This issue was difficult to overcome and is often blamed for some of the current problems this country is facing today.

Forty-two percent of people in the DRC are currently expected to use unimproved methods of sanitation (Mendez, 2020). This includes pit latrines and bucket latrines with unclean water in them. As of 2018, only twenty-nine percent of people have access to ample sanitation facilities (Mendez 2020). Along with the sanitation practices being incredibly below expectation, there is absolutely nothing the people in these villages can do to rectify this situation on their own. The majority of these people are living off a mere two dollars a day, which isn't enough to keep their children alive. In turn, it's also not enough for a pregnant woman to be able to sustain the amount of energy and nutrition needed to keep her and the child nutritionally healthy.

Around two million pregnant women in the DRC are currently suffering from the sad fact that they have no access to basic sanitation along with dealing with acute malnutrition (Akilimali, 2022). This will have a large effect on the child. Over one million babies are projected to be born living in the grips of hunger and malnutrition directly after entering the world. There's no way to expect these babies to live when they are already hanging in the balance of not having access to nutrient-dense resources from the moment they are born.

The most efficient way to provide help to these communities is through humanitarian aid, contributing to organizations that devote their work to providing the resources these constituents need to survive (HTScongo, 2022). Donations and resources will be the key to improved infrastructure. Another crucial step in solving this problem long term is education. The younger generations need to recognize the opportunity to operate self-sufficiently and find ways to maintain this way of living for their future.

There are numerous ways this country can become agriculturally inclined. They have functional land and a very large amount of water. The challenge is to use it with the whole country’s needs in mind. Being able to use the present resources could make a dramatic difference in malnutrition rates, poverty rates, and even death rates. Having access to nutrient-dense food, without having to worry about the supply coming from an outside source, is the key to solving the hunger crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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