

# PROFILE: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



The setting for Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has suffered merciless exploitation since Belgium's King Leopold made it his personal property.

Potentially Africa's richest country, DRC has vast resources of timber, minerals, oil and gas. Such riches – as well as ethnic rivalries – lie at the heart of the conflict that has blighted DRC since independence in 1965.

In 1997, DRC plunged into a many-sided war, at one point involving armies of six African nations. By 2002, more than 4 million people had died: the deadliest conflict since the Second World War.

Since then, a peace plan and a UN peacekeeping force have held all-out conflict at bay. But sporadic violence continues. Women are most vulnerable, especially to rape.

Mass displacement has put millions of children at risk of illiteracy, child labour and sex trafficking.

Lack of access to safe water, sanitation and healthcare is compounded by humidity and high rainfall – an ideal breeding ground for epidemics – while barely useable roads cause food surpluses to rot and push up imported food costs.

Amid these huge challenges, the church has been recognised by DRC's government as a major 'institutional body' able to reach marginalised communities with aid.

## TEARFUND'S WORK IN DRC

Tearfund has been working in DRC since 1986 and is currently supporting 11 partners: eight in the east and three in the west. Here are some examples of their work:

PPSSP (Programme de Promotion des Soins de Santé Primaires) is providing healthcare for displaced people and their host communities. A community-based approach is deployed in the construction of latrines, water sources and household water-storage units.

CRC (Centre Résolution des Conflits) promotes reconciliation in communities that have suffered decades of conflict and militia attacks. Activities include peace meetings, cultural and sporting activities, and addressing family conflicts caused by rape or testing HIV positive.

CECA-20 (Communauté Evangélique Chrétienne en Afrique) is addressing food shortages in the district of Haut-Uélé. Marginalised farmers and pastoralists are trained in better crop husbandry and animal breeding methods. Local churches and communities are also being mobilised for self-help and for use of local resources to improve their living conditions.

Meanwhile, Tearfund's Disaster Management Team is currently running a series of relief projects in three provinces – South Kivu, North Kivu and Maniema – providing urgent services in the areas of water and sanitation, school reconstruction, health education and food security.

- Pray for people living in poverty in DRC.
- Please pray for our partners and Disaster Management Team in DRC as they seek to help others.
- And pray for DRC: for justice, peace, good health and hope for everyone.