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for every child

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



The opportunity

Africa is on the move: the continent has some of the fastest-growing economies which are shaping a brighter future. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of these examples, with over half of its 81 million population under 20 years old. This presents a unique opportunity to leverage the skills, resources and capacities of millions of children and adolescents, to support even greater progress and new growth opportunities for them and the communities in which they live. In support of this, the government is currently updating its comprehensive five-year national strategic plan, which highlights education as a key to socio-economic development, as well as the need for robust investment in human capital. The large young population, combined with consistent economic growth, means there is an excellent opportunity for investment in a 'demographic dividend'. With the right government policies, investments and strong technical support, together we can ensure that DRC's children and adolescents contribute to a national vision.

Schools for Africa (SFA) is a global initiative which aims to achieve quality education across sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring that all children, including the most marginalized children, are learning and gaining the skills for succeeding in life and work. SFA convenes business, governments and individuals, and has a proven track record in partnering with the private sector to achieve education results for children.

The challenges

While the DRC has the potential and opportunity to change its trajectory and move millions of people out of poverty, many challenges remain:

- **Quality of education** – children are not provided with educational materials, such as textbooks, or the appropriate and up-to-date teaching methods that they need; schools are unsafe; and there is a significant shortage of qualified teachers;
- **Equality in education** – there is insufficient support for adolescent girls and children with disabilities. Both require specific programmes and outreach so they can attend school, be safe, and learn in inclusive environments;
- **Data and systems improvement** – currently, the Ministry of Education and national partners have insufficient information with which to budget, reform and strategically manage the education system.

UNICEF's response in DRC

UNICEF is a national leader in children's rights and education and has operated in the DRC since 1963. Working together with partners and the government, UNICEF continues to provide support and ensure that sustainable investments are there to improve the quality of education in the DRC.

Over the last ten years, UNICEF has helped raise the DRC's school enrolment rates from 50 to 66 per cent; mobilizing parents, caregivers and teachers to ensure that once children are enrolled in school, they have the support to complete their education. In 2016, for example, UNICEF helped put social protection measures in place to reduce school dropout among 142,900 of the most vulnerable primary school children in approximately 5,000 schools. UNICEF also supported the government's massive 2015 curriculum reform, which introduced life skills courses and mandated that lessons are taught in local languages, if necessary. Furthermore, in 2017, UNICEF worked with partners to provide education to approximately 207,000 displaced and disadvantaged children, including 95,000 girls.

UNICEF strives toward gender equality, ensuring that equal numbers of boys and girls are in school. As a result, 13 out of 26 provinces now see equal gross intake and enrolment rates for both boys and girls in primary school.

A sustainable approach

UNICEF follows children along their entire educational pathway, identifying three critical junctures, or opportunities, for partner investment. This holistic approach to education begins at **early learning** – the critical preparatory period before primary school begins – then moves to **quality primary education** – the first few grades where children begin accumulating skills – and then continues through **adolescence for success**, where the goal is to adequately equip adolescents for better well-being, good socio-economic integration and adulthood. Schools for Africa also spotlights adolescent girls and children with disabilities, who experience significant barriers to attending and staying in school.

The following outlines some sustainable interventions in three priority areas: promoting early learning, supporting quality primary education, and gearing adolescents for success.



1
Early
learning



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Children who receive early learning through pre-primary education have a foundation that sets them up for greater academic achievements and a lifetime of gains.

At present, only 4.5 per cent of children in the DRC attend pre-school. UNICEF'S goal is to double

this number over the next five years, using a three-pronged approach that prioritizes pre-primary education, works with parents and caregivers so they understand the importance of early learning, and promotes 'right age admission' into primary school.



Spotlight on children with disabilities

UNICEF believes schools must be inclusive environments that support students with disabilities. The DRC is hindered by the lack of reliable, comprehensive disaggregated data on vulnerable populations needed to drive policies, strategies and programmes to ensure no one is excluded from education systems.



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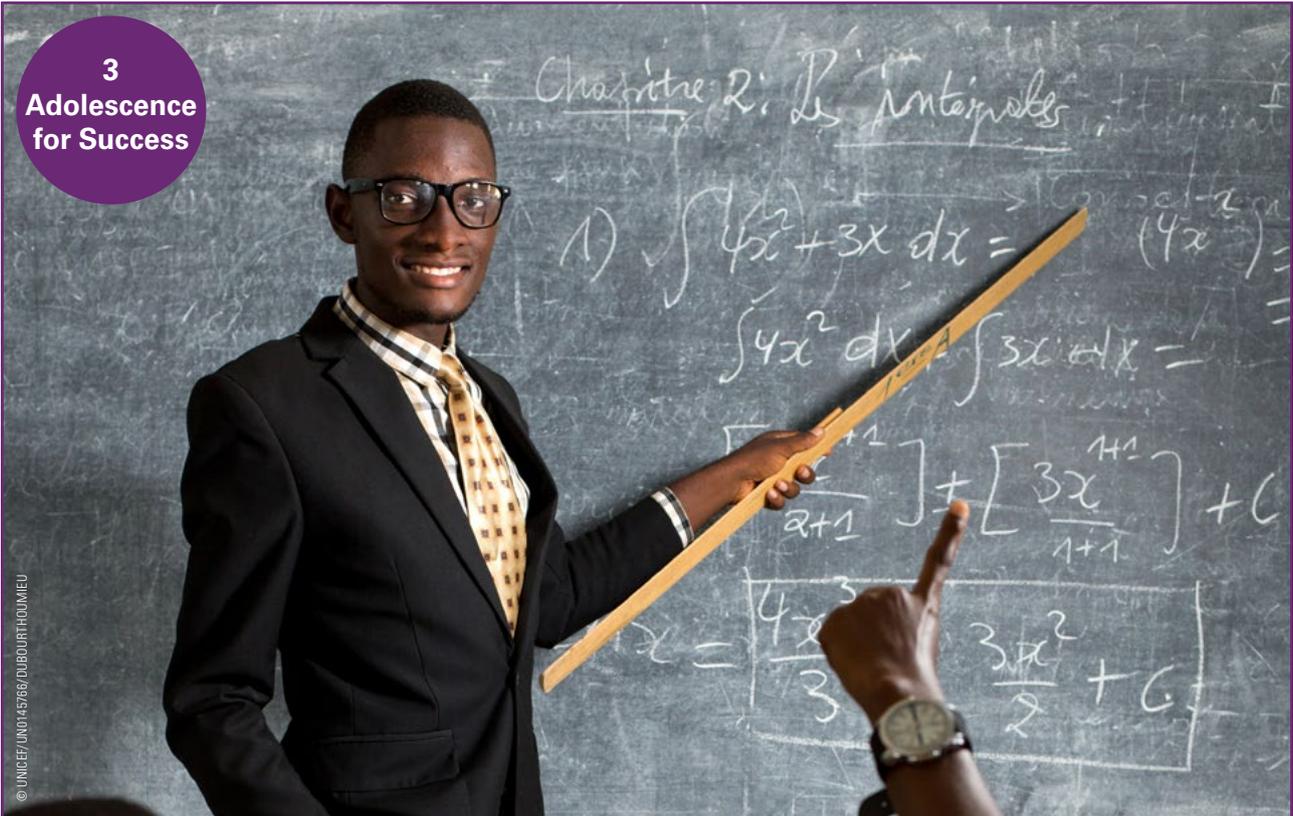


Improving the quality of education – meaning that children acquire technical, social and emotional knowledge and transferable skills – is central to a child’s learning. It leads to a better quality of life, particularly regarding income, health and wider economic development. In the DRC, just over 75 per cent of children complete primary school. Many children do not meet basic numeracy and literacy competencies, and only six out of ten children start primary school at the correct age. The country’s prolonged conflict and instability have weakened infrastructure, led to a dearth of qualified teachers, and resulted in limited educational resources.

UNICEF promotes four interventions to significantly strengthen the education system and create an inclusive learning environment for all students.

These are: investments in cost-effective and technology-based teaching and learning materials; innovative classroom practices that equip teachers to meet individual learner needs by allowing children to learn either alone or in groups; gender-responsive and inclusive curricula; and the implementation of a national, harmonized Education Management Information System to facilitate planning, monitoring and research to uncover the barriers preventing children from attending school.

3
Adolescence
for Success



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Investing in adolescents and young people matters. Prospects for further education and employment are proven to increase greatly when children receive a strong educational base. This base is also key for creating social cohesion and reducing conflict. Achieving numeracy and literacy is no longer enough to ensure children and young people are successful in life. Transferable skills are now a requirement to ensure that children, adolescents and young people are equipped for success.

UNICEF in the DRC supports young people through youth clubs that offer information on sexual and reproductive health, and vocational education programmes to support out-of-school adolescents to develop functional skills required in the job market. UNICEF also provides teachers, trainers and inspectors with gender-sensitive teaching materials and information to help them reduce gender-based school violence.



Spotlight on adolescent girls

Girls in the DRC are uniquely burdened by child marriage, teenage pregnancy, negative social norms and gender discrimination; they have lower literacy than boys (74 per cent compared to 91 per cent in 2017). UNICEF promotes secondary schools that are responsive to these unique challenges, offering adequate sanitation and menstruation facilities, sexual and reproductive health services, and girls' clubs, which provide critical safe spaces.



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Impact and results

UNICEF is a national leader in children’s rights and educational development in the DRC. Working in partnership with the government, UNICEF continues to support and improve the country’s education quality. Investments in Schools for Africa will, by 2023, enable the following results:

- Increase the number of 5- to 17-year-olds who acquire basic knowledge and skills. Particular focus will be placed on adolescent girls and boys, who will receive technical and vocational skills;
- Increase teacher capacity through distance training and facilitate experience exchanges and knowledge sharing at a school level;
- Build on relevant networks and partner with local platforms to raise political commitment for education;
- Foster strong public–private partnerships to equip teenage girls and boys, including those who are not at school and those with disabilities, with critical skills so they can thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Why partner with UNICEF?

UNICEF has more than 70 years of experience ensuring the health, nutrition, education and protection of more of the world’s children than any other organization. UNICEF works in the most challenging and least accessible places, reaching children, including adolescents, in both emergency and development contexts. UNICEF’s unique qualifications – strong presence in over 190 countries, close working relationships with local and national governments, a child participation model, and firm commitment to community engagement and buy-in – enable UNICEF to develop sustainable systems at scale. These continuously reach all children, especially those most in need and those that are excluded in other development models.

Building on UNICEF’s successful history in the DRC over the past four decades, Schools for Africa will elevate our education outcomes for all children. Together with partners, we will scale successful education programmes, mobilize partnerships at the country level, and ensure that all children and adolescents have equal access to inclusive, quality education.



How you can invest

UNICEF believes that the private sector should be part of the solution to the world’s gravest challenges. A broad range of partners – philanthropists, foundations, business and individuals – can make investments at the global, regional and country level, catalysing sustainable

solutions and systemic change that will create a more equitable planet for all. More specifically, private sector partners can work with UNICEF in the DRC to achieve results for children and adolescents through:

| CATEGORY | HOW CAN PARTNERS HELP? |
|--|--|
| <i>Innovation and technology</i> | <p>UNICEF has a strong track record for investing in innovation and technology. Technology helps to accelerate the achievement of results, and UNICEF is looking for new solutions to achieve more.</p> <p><i>Key areas for partnership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support education technology (edTech) platforms as a delivery tool to reach more learners (including through catch-up and remedial classes) and teachers. • Strengthen and support the Education Management Information System and the collection of administrative data to strategically plan and take corrective action. • Deploy effective human-centred design approaches that involve adolescents to include their perspectives on and solutions to issues they identify and prioritize. |
| <i>Financing</i> | <p>UNICEF needs financial contributions to ensure that programmes can be implemented on the ground. UNICEF will leverage existing resources to catalyse significant learnings and results.</p> <p><i>Key areas for partnership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial support to pilot, test, validate and scale up education programmes for adolescents, including peace-building programmes. • Improve the quality of teaching resources, including learning materials and curriculum reform, to include life skills for the job market. • Support programmes for menstrual hygiene management and care. |
| <i>Advocacy, communication and influence</i> | <p>UNICEF looks at the reach of partners, whether through their products and services or communication and advocacy platforms, to influence, reinforce and advance key messages and priorities with a joint voice.</p> <p><i>Key areas for partnership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose new and engaging ways of connecting with young people to increase access to information (particularly sexual health reproductive knowledge) and feedback mechanisms. |
| <i>Expertise</i> | <p>Partners from a range of fields, sectors and industries are needed to contribute novel approaches and fresh perspectives, fill knowledge gaps and mobilize important stakeholders to deliver solutions to adolescents’ most pressing needs.</p> <p><i>Key areas for partnership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot and scale up digital learning/edTech solutions and platforms. • Develop digital content for new curricula, including life skills. |
| <i>Data and evidence generation</i> | <p>UNICEF understands that data collection, evidence generation and learning are central to programmatic success, and looks to partners for support.</p> <p><i>Key areas for partnership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, develop or strengthen data collection and data analysis systems to inform better programming, including improving data availability on children with disabilities. • Pilot and scale up innovative real-time data platforms to monitor and adapt programming for girls to ensure its impact. • Conduct research on barriers for out-of-school children. |

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