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**POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY IN THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

by

Ezabele wa Yasak

**A THESIS
Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

By

Ezabele wa Yasak

Food insecurity and poverty in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have been explained by both national and international factors. We assume that food insecurity is caused primarily by lack of democracy and unequal distribution of resources, especially land and income. The lack of democracy, the poor management, and lack of accountability by Congolese leaders are some factors sustaining and perpetuating poverty and food insecurity in the DRC. At the national and local level, there is a great need to educate Congolese people to shift away from the traditional practices that perpetuate gender inequality, poverty, hunger, and food insecurity. At the global levels, a study is needed on the conditions for aid for development. The cutting spending on social programs might perpetuate poverty.

It is concluded that DRC needs modernization of agriculture, food storage facilities, and transportation system connecting rural areas to cities within the country and with neighboring African countries. Investing in rural areas by improving the infrastructure such as road, schools, hospitals, bridges, solar energy, water systems are needed if DRC wants to alleviate poverty and address food insecurity issues. The lack of job creation and peace in DRC have undermined the prospects for poverty reduction.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of tables.....	v
 Chapter	
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	1
1.2 Purpose of the Study.....	1
2. Overview of Congolese Poverty and Food Insecurity ...	3
2.1 Food Insecurity.....	3
2.2 Poverty.....	4
3. The National Dimension Of Congolese Poverty and Food Insecurity	7
3.1 The National Budget.....	7
3.2 The Food Production Process.....	9
3.3 The Food Storage Facilities in DRC.....	10
3.4 The Food Distribution System.....	11
4. Project For Development.....	13
3.1 Short Term Projects.....	13
3.2 Medium Term Projects.....	14
3.3 Long Term Projects.....	15
5. Implications Of Food Insecurity in DRC.....	17
6. The International Dimension Of Congolese Poverty.....	20
7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations.....	23
7.1 Conclusion.....	23
7.2 Policy Recommendations.....	25
8. References.....	26

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
3.1	Zaire Central Government Expenditure for selected ministries.....	8
3.2	Government Expenditure for Agriculture as percent of total, 1980-1987.....	9
6.1	U.S Loans and Grants to the Government of Zaire, 1962-1991.....	20

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

During the early 1960's the Democratic Republic of the Congo gained its independence from Belgium. Soon thereafter, Patrice Lumumba was assassinated and the country was placed under the military dictatorship of General Mobutu Sese Seko. Following Mobutu's death, the country was subjected to the reign of another dictator, Laurent Kabila, which resulted in virtual civil war based on the resulting political and regional cleavages and divisions in its citizenry. Failing to meet the needs of the people, political unrest arose causing significant interest and emphasis to be placed on governance instead of maintaining the food supply. Moreover, in the political conflict and under the disruption of warring factions and, eventually, different foreign armies, there has been a great disruption of civil life, agriculture, and agribusiness. As the food supply dwindled, more and more unrest developed among the citizenry.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this paper is to explain the four components of poverty and food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), providing (1) an overview of Congolese poverty and food insecurity, (2) a description of the national dimension of poverty and food insecurity in the this nation, (3) a description of the international forces impacting on and creating poverty and insecurity in the DRC, and (4) providing some conclusions and policy recommendations about poverty and food insecurity in DRC.

Our research methods of the study were based mostly on secondary analysis. This indirect observation consists of reviewing and analyzing data that have already been collected by others. Images in this thesis are presented in color.

Chapter 2

Overview Of Congolese Poverty And Food Insecurity

2.1 Food Insecurity

Food security exists when a population has access to adequate food supply. The availability of food is vital for an active and healthy life and supports the further development of social life and accumulation. By contrast, food insecurity results from the lack of access to sufficient food. Thus, as the Congolese people have lost access to an adequate food supply, many now suffer from malnutrition and other related diseases, and the fabric of the society has frayed.

According to Lawrence Bush and William Lacy (1994), ensuring food security entails meeting three conditions: (a) availability of food, i.e. having sufficient food available for the entire population at all times to sustain human life; (b) accessibility of food, the ability to acquire food at the market; and (c) adequate supply of a variety of foods, i.e. achieving a balanced diet with a variety of foods throughout the year that are free from disease and toxic substances.

Food insecurity can be either chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity involves a continuously inadequate diet caused by the persistent inability to acquire food by all of the means: production, purchase, bartering, sharing, foraging, etc. On the other hand, transitory food insecurity is a temporary decline in a household's access to an adequate supply of food due to the instability of food prices or household incomes. In the DRC, 12 million people (42% of the population) are experiencing food insecurity (World Bank, 1998:2); therefore, in the late 1990s, the DRC's food situation became serious and,

with warfare and armed gangs controlling civil society, the food situation continues to deteriorate.

The problem of food insecurity is not one of food alone but also results from the general problem of poverty and of unequal distribution of purchasing power among and within socio-economic classes, regions, and nations.

2.2 Poverty

Hunger and poverty often are explained in the terms of natural factors - climate, desert, scarcity of land, and livestock pressure. Other factors include over-cultivation, population pressure, lack of capital and technology, unskilled labor, lack of foreign aid and food aid, lack of food storage facilities, and inadequate transportation systems. Clearly, in all but the most extreme conditions, explanations of poverty that focus on a single factor are misleading

The sources and persistence of poverty are among the social problems most widely debated in sociology and social policy [see Duncan (1999, 1992), and Vanderluis (2000)]. Poverty is the bedeviling eroder of development facing governments and populations throughout the world, including the DRC. Often, it is difficult to define or measure the concept of poverty because it is interconnected with various concepts of development and underdevelopment as well as the social concepts of modernity, power, inequality, gender, race, religion, economics, social development, culture, health, justice, and food insecurity.

The most widely accepted definition of poverty is based on a U.S. federal measure known as the poverty line (also found in other countries, as the “poverty datum line” in Southern Africa, frequently specified for “low income subsistence populations”

and populations in urban and industrial societies). Across Africa, it has been referred to as the “poverty datum line.” Poverty or low income is defined in terms of adequacy of current family income to meet a constant absolute standard of consumption based on family size, farm versus non-farm residence, and the sex and age of the head of household. In Africa, sometimes different criteria are used when assessing poverty of “urban wage earners” or “rural subsistence workers.” The Census Bureau, thus, reduces poverty to low-income standards (Wilber, 1974). In sociology, however, poverty means more than income. Despite the lack of a universally-accepted definition of poverty, our understanding of some of the social problems associated with poverty include: unemployment, insufficient income, poor housing, lack of or inadequate education, lack of access to transportation and communication, lack of access to credit, poor or insufficient medical care, excessive fertility, hunger, malnutrition, etc. These factors are reflected in the work of de Koster (1994), and Rogers (1979). In the 1960s in the United States, Daniel Patrick Moynihan finds these congealed into a cluster of mutually reinforcing factors, which he identified together as “the Culture of Poverty.”

Various factors contribute to poverty in Africa, and these factors interact, exacerbate poverty, inequality, and hunger. In many African countries, which are still experiencing underdevelopment, extreme poverty, starvation, and/or famine, most of the people are not consuming sufficient food. The DRC is an example as food insecurity is a problem throughout Africa.

The theoretical frameworks defining poverty and hunger often are linked to some of the assumptions of modernization and trickle down theories. In reviewing the modernization theory, we find the argument that the lack of technology, capital, skills,

and modern values are the causes of underdevelopment in the Southern Hemisphere (or the “South”) in general and in the DRC in particular. In these perspectives, development often is reduced to economic growth. The theory, thus, argues that farmers need to be modernized in order to increase their agricultural production in order to earn more income to improve their well-being. Modernization of agriculture at the infrastructure level requires adoption and diffusion of technologies, fertilizers, storage facilities, and transportation systems. Congolese farmers need engagement in a free market and export economy in order to earn foreign currency adequate to pay personal and national debts and to purchase products that allow a “modern” lifestyle (e.g. televisions, radios, cars, movies, clothing, cellular phones).

The trickle down theory argues that the best solution for the alleviation of poverty and for achieving food security is to assist the rich by providing them investment capital. This, allegedly, will generate more factories, jobs, exports, import substitution, and wealth for all. The reality is that the conditions in Africa – and in the DRC-- appear not to support this assumption.

Chapter 3

The National Dimension Of Congolese Poverty And Food Insecurity

This analysis of the national dimension of Congolese poverty and food insecurity includes five subsections: (a) the national budget, (b) the food production process, (c) the food storage facilities, (d) the food distribution system, and (e) the social implications of food insecurity in the Congo.

3.1 The National Budget

During the dictatorial regime of Mobutu, the national budget was not devoted to agricultural development, social welfare, or education. Rather, the funds were devoted primarily to army operations, which included paramilitary forces, the gendarmeries, and Civil Guard units aimed at securing and sustaining the dictatorial regime and anti-terrorist operations. According to the Europa Year Book (1991:151) and UNDP (1992:77), defense expenditures of the DRC were 7.5% and 1.5 % for public health. In the same light, the World Bank (1992:238) reported details about Zaire's expenditures from 1972-1990.

Table 3.1 Zaire Central Government Expenditure for Selected Ministries
(Percentage of total expenditure)

Zaire Ministry	1972	1990
Defense	11.1 %	6.7 %
Education	15.1	1.4
Health	2.4	0.7
Other ministries	71.4	91.2
Total	100.0 %	100.0%

Source: World Bank, World Development Report 1992. Development Environment Indicators. Oxford University Press, 1992. p. 238 (see Table 11, Central Government Expenditure).

As we see in Table 1, the Zairian national budget has been devoted primarily to defense, and less for health and well-being of the Zairian people. For instance, in 1972, 11.1 percent of the national budget was devoted to defense compared to 2.4% for health. Two decades later, in 1990, 6.7 percent of the national budget was devoted to defense compared to 0.7 percent for health and 1.4 percent for education. In the Congo, this situation has led to poor health infrastructure, illiteracy, and neglect of agriculture.

The World Military Expenditure and Arms Transfers (1988:14) provided a map for relative burden of military expenditure in 48 African countries for 1987. Zaire is one of the African countries with larger military expenditures than for social welfare, education, and communication combined.

3.2 The Food Production Process

The lack of modernization of agriculture can have a negative impact on agriculture production among farmers. This would then exacerbate hunger and poverty in the country.

The World Bank (1989: 129) underlines the percentage of total expenditure in agriculture as compared to other African countries in the table below.

Table 3.2 Government Expenditure for Agriculture as percent of total, 1980-1987.

Years	Zaire	Zambia	Africa, Sub-Saharan
1980	1.1 %	23.0 %	7.9 %
1981	1.9	12.5	7.2
1982	3.0	16.4	7.5
1983	1.9	11.4	7.7
1984	0.8	13.6	7.3
1985	0.5	10.8	6.8

Source: World Bank, African Economic and Financial Data. 1989 p.129.
(Data not available for 1986-87).

As shown in Table 2, the DRC devoted little of its budget to agriculture. In 1985, for instance, Zaire spent only 0.5 % of its budget on agriculture while Zambia spent 10.8 % of its budget.

In addition, Congolese agriculture still depends on primitive technologies and relies only on a few crops for export to earn foreign currency. Labor remains the main

determinant of the production. According to FAO (1984), the percentage of the economically- active population engaged in agriculture still remains very high (74%) as compared to the developed countries such as 2.1% for the United States and even many other African countries. In the DRC, the labor force in agriculture was 82.0% in 1965 and 71.5% in 1986-1989.

The Congolese farming and non-farming labor force, is mostly unskilled and uneducated. An employee with little education remains unproductive in the workplace; therefore, she/he will be rewarded less. The workers with less income will be unable to live a decent life and improve their family's living conditions. These unskilled workers and farmers will remain poor and have children living in poverty.

Moreover, there are insufficient modern inputs such as improved seed, technology, and fertilizer. Fertilizer consumption (a hundred grams of plant nutrients per hectare of arable land in Zaire was only six percent in 1971-1981 and reached only 10 in 1989-1990 (World Bank, 1992:224). A study released by the World Development Report (1991) indicates that Zaire's fertilizer consumption (100 g/ha) was nine in 1987-1988 when Malawi's fertilizer consumption (100 g/ha) was 203. Kenya's fertilizer consumption was 421 and Zambia's 183.

Thus, Zaire's fertilizer consumption per hectare is starkly low as compared to most other African countries, suggesting how the combination of lack of technology, capital, and fertilizer explains the very low agricultural productivity in Zaire.

3.3 The Food Storage Facilities in DRC

Lack of storages facilities for post-harvest preservation also exacerbates the food crisis in the Congo. DRC's farmers lack everything but the most traditional of food

storage facilities. Agricultural produce often is kept in the field or in farmers' houses. As a result, farmers lose a significant amount of food production due to bad weather, rodents and other animals, birds, and insects. Most of the food stored for use later is smoked or dried, consuming valuable wood supplies and increasing the labor burden of Congolese women, already overburdened with subsistence and childcare activities. For instance, cassava roots are kept underground covered with dried banana leaves for at least two weeks. There is virtually no refrigeration and electricity in most Congolese villages despite the fact the country produces large amounts of hydro-electricity. In fact, the Congo is able to serve the African continent from South Africa to Morocco, in the North Africa with electrical power. Additional studies are needed to adequately address the issue and find ways to alleviate the problem.

3.4 The Food Distribution System

Transport and marketing facilities have been neglected during the dictatorial regimes of Mobutu and Laurent Kabila. Existing infrastructure is geared to moving export crops and minerals out of DRC to developed countries. Virtually no effort has been made to connect urban and rural areas within DRC or the DRC with other nations in Africa. For instance, you can easily fly from Kisangani International Airport, Congo to Belgium in six hours. However, to drive 110 miles from Kisangani to Opala within the Congo requires three to seven days. Why is this so? The problem is that the road is not well maintained because of the lack of investment in basic infrastructure. No comprehensive national inter-urban highways exist in DRC. As a result, farmers do not produce surpluses, requiring additional inputs of labor and capital, when they are unable to sell their products because the goods cannot be transported to the market. In most DRC

villages and cities, even today, transport is executed primarily with bicycles, head-loads, animal carts, and canoes. All these factors contribute to perpetuating and exacerbating food insecurity, poverty, and underdevelopment of the Congo.

In order to feed the Congolese people, rural areas need to be linked to major cities. The State needs to partner with the private sector for massive rebuilding of road networks in the months and years after the reduction of civil conflict. This endeavor must follow in three steps: short term, medium term and long term projects.

Chapter 4

Projects For Development

4.1 Short-term projects

The Kivu and Upper-Congo Provinces are the major food baskets of the DRC. They have more arable land than any part of the country. These regions have several ethnic groups, which produce meat in sufficient quantities to feed the entire country. Additionally, two major lakes provide sufficient fish to feed the entire country if there were transportation links. The network to facilitate getting these products to market can be divided into 15 major road route connections:

- Kisangani-Ubundu- Kindu-Bukavu-Goma-Kigali (Rwanda)
- Ilebo-Kindu-Bukavu-Kalemie-Mpanda (Tanzania)
- Lubumbashi-Manono-Kabalo-Kindu-Ubundu-Kisangani-Ikela-Ilebo-Bandundu-Kinshasa.
- Bukavu- Kindu- Mbuji Mayi- Kamina- Kolwezi- Ndola (Zambia)
- Kinshasa-Bandundu-Boende-Bumba-Aketi-Titule-Isiro-Aba (Sudan)
- Kinshasa-Kikwit-Tshikapa-Lukapo (Angola)
- Isiro-Nia Nia-Kisangani
- Isiro –Bunia-Kisangani
- Isiro-Faradje-Aba- Juba (Sudan)
- Goma-Bunia-Nia Nia- Kisangani-Opala-Lisala-Mbandaka
- Kisangani-Mambasa-Bunia-Beni-Kampala(Uganda)
- Kamina-Likasi-Lubumbashi-Lusaka (Zambia)

- **Moanda-Matadi-Mbanza Ngungu-Kinshasa-Brazzaville (Congo)**
- **Kamina-Kolwezi-Likasi-Lubumbashi-Lusaka (Zambia)**
- **Isiro-Bumba-Lisala-Zongo-Bangui (Central Africa Republic)**

As seen, these highways are intended to connecting villages to cities within the DRC and neighbors countries. Better roads and well maintained are key for development and poverty reduction. People will be able to travel and sell their produce, meet new people, and better their lives. In addition, three major inland waterways are needed in the short term:

Waterway 1: Congo River: Kisangani-Kinshasa and Kindu-Ubundu

Waterway 2: Ubangi River, Kasai River, Lomami River and Uele River.

Waterway 3: Lake Kivu, Lake Albert and Lake Tanganyika.

In order to utilize these waterways, they must be maintained by regular removal of water plants (esp. water hyacinth, a recent scourge of central African waterways and lakes) and control the sand erosion that is dire during many of the rainy seasons.

4.2 Medium Term Projects

The first medium term step required is to transform a few networks into major paved highways. The quality and direction of US Interstate highways provide an excellent framework and model for building transcontinental highways. I strongly suggest that the Congolese authorities need to allow American contractors to partner with the Congolese government in building Congolese arterial highways, drawing on and adopting the American systems for constructing and maintaining roads and highways. The participation of the private sector appears critical in the development of the Congolese transportation and communication system.

The highways with rest areas as found in American are highly recommended for the DRC. After 30 years of French and Belgian expert advice on transportation, the DRC has neither developed nor improved its transportation system, as has the United States of America.

There are six connections to be achieved in medium term projects:

1. Trans-African: Bangui-DRC (Beni-Bukavu)-Uganda-Tanzania (Dar Es Salam)
2. Beni-Lubumbashi-Zambia
3. Beni-Kisangani-Mbandaka-Central Republic
4. Moanda-Kinshasa-Boma-Matadi-Mbanza-Ngungu
5. Lubumbashi-Likasi-Kamina-Kananga-Kikwit-Kinshasa-Brazzaville.

Moreover, DRC should start the building of the new international port at Moanda. The nearby Kitona Military Base offers an appropriate site for a transit depot. With the end of the Cold War, there is no national interest in maintaining the Kitona Base for international military supply transit. The construction of the port at Kitona will be a major investment in exporting Congolese natural resources without transshipment and the bureaucratic and tax deterrence acquired in passing through Angola or Southern Africa.

All major towns and cities need public transportation including buses and subways. The private sector should be encouraged to build toll-roads as in the case of the United States.

4.3 Long-term projects

The current system of railways, which was built during the colonial system, is inadequate. It consists of three different railway gauges of 0.9, 1.0, and 1.2 meters

respectively. A truly national railway needs a uniform gauge in order to accommodate both the transportation of goods and people and to avoid the transshipment required in gauge changes. Three major railways are likely to link remote areas of the DRC to major cities and ports:

- Lubumashi- Kolwezi- Dilolo-Tenke-Fungurume and Moanda
- Ubundu-Kisangani-Bukavu to Rwanda
- Kisangani-Bunia-Kilomoto to Uganda

Chapter 5

Implications Of Food Insecurity in DRC

Most Congolese people live in extreme poverty. Sometimes, people may eat once a day instead of three times, and this has become so common that it is known in Congo as “*gong unique*.” In most Congolese cities, people are poor because they lack any access to income-producing employment other than microenterprise, which usually produces only tiny incomes. Some people eat once a day if they are lucky to find food. Many eat only once every two days.

In 1986, a survey carried out by Benoit Verhaegen (1990) found that the price of maize meal for six to eight people was 150 Z (Zaire currency) in Kisangani. The minimum legal salary varies between 250 and 600 zaires per month. The majority of companies apply this scale. This means that the unskilled worker earns, on average, enough to pay for only two to four meals per month. During the militarist years of the Mobutu era, the purchasing power of an average worker in the Congo dropped precipitously. Now, inflation has been reduced to 11% from the disastrously more than 3500% during the last year of Mobutu’s regime in 1996.

Higher food price and lower incomes lead households to substitute cheaper food and less desirable consumer goods for more expensive ones in order to keep their food intake at a minimally adequate level. Malnutrition was very rare in 1960’s at the end of the colonial era under Belgian rule, but today, malnutrition is a serious problem in the DRC. In Kivu, Zaire, for instance, 10-15% of population is affected by malnutrition. Thirty per cent of children between one and 10 years old are diagnosed as malnourished

in the DRC's capital of Kinshasa alone. In 1977, one of every five children hospitalized under 10 years dies of malnutrition.

The state of poverty and human deprivation appear to be the leading cause of food insecurity in the Congo. The proportion of the population with access to safe water in 1990-1995 was 27% for the DRC, 66 % for Rwanda, 53 % for Kenya, and 40 % for Nigeria. Thus, in the DRC, more than 70% of total population does not have access to safe drinking water. Moreover, in 1990-1995 the percentage of the population with access to any safe sanitation and healthcare was 23% for the DRC, 35 % for Nigeria, 58 % for Rwanda, and 77 % for Kenya.

The first goal of the State always should be to reduce the structural threats to the safety and well-being of its citizenry. In this respect, the new government must develop adequate delivery systems and work with institutions to deliver preventive medicine in remote arrears in DRC. The health care system inherited from Belgian colonization was actually quite good, some say the best in the continent, because, the health care system depended largely on missionary societies and indigenous health workers for provision and services. The DRC should restore this system with tax relief for churches to build hospitals and efficiently run the existing ones. Two major areas are linked to preventive medicine, clean water and vaccination. The following are suggestions to improve health care system in the DRC:

- DRC, churches, private institutions and NGO's should work to bring drinking water to all people within the DRC.
- Improve the literacy of women and their awareness of public health
- Use public and private media to disseminate information on public health

- **Vaccination programs should be developed for children at an early age to decrease infant mortality.**
- **An educational program on safe sex should be implemented to stop HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases.**
- **“Barefoot doctors” – paramedical staff – should undergo limited training to run rural dispensaries in rural areas.**
- **There is a need to create a social “Medicare” program in the Congo, financed by taxes payer.**

Chapter 6

The International Dimension On Congolese Poverty

Zaire has received substantial support from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Western countries. Despite the amount of aid received, DRC under Mobutu appear to be far from development.

Table 6.1 U.S. Loans and Grants to the Government of Zaire, 1962-1991
(millions of dollars)

Years	USAID	PEACE CORPS	MILITARY AID	TOTAL AID
Total 1962-1985	\$707.4	\$50.2	\$200.7	\$958.3
1986	63.9	4.0	8.0	75.8
1987	60.9	3.3	5.3	69.5
1988	54.9	3.7	4.1	62.7
1989	59.7	3.3	5.1	68.0
1990	40.4	3.0	4.0	47.4
1991	46.0	3.0	0.0	49.0
Total 1986-1991	325.7	20.0	26.7	372.4
Total 1962-1991	\$1,033.1	\$70.2	\$227.7	\$1,330.7

Source: The Washington Office on Africa, June 1992, p. 20 (Appendix) 3.

Note: Military Assistance was terminated in FY 1991 at the insistence of the U.S. Congress. Development Assistance was terminated in June 1991 after Zaire was unable to repay its debts under the provisions of the Brooks Amendment of the U.S. Senate.

Observations from the Data Presented

- A great deal of aid was given for the Zairian military government of General Mobutu Sese Seko in spite of the regime's record of human rights violations as underlined by Ted Trainer (1989:89).
- Because of mismanagement and corruption, the economic assistance received had virtually no positive impact on people's lives. No infrastructure, no hospitals, roads, schools, or bridges were built with the funds. And even the teachers in elementary and secondary schools were not paid for years.
- As Harrington (1997:142) has described, foreign capital drains indigenous capital from the country. Harrington underscores the United Nations' estimates of 1970 that \$2.6 billion flowed out of Zaire/Congo as profits on foreign investment. Now in the 1990s and beyond, the Third World countries are spending more resources on debt service than on social and economic activities that affect their people's lives.
- Food aid could have some negative impact on local food production, but additional studies are needed in the Congo to adequately address the issue.

In addition to Mobutu's mismanagement of foreign aid, the World

Bank/IMF/IDA Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) require the following:

- Cutting the government budget deficit by reducing public expenditure
- Reducing subsidies on the production and consumption of inputs and outputs
- Devaluating the local currency
- Liberalizing foreign trade by removing import quotas and lowering tariffs
- Privatizing public enterprises to improve their financial performance

Food aid in cereal (1000.00 MT) for instance was 10% of the total before the SAPs and 55% after SAPS for DRC. Food aid has increased for cereal. Cuts in government spending on services such as roads, education, housing, and health that are crucial to the poor result in undermining the welfare of the Congolese people.

A human capital analysis in Africa in general and in the DRC in particular gives a dark picture. In minerals and agricultural potential, the DRC is one of the richest countries in Africa; however, it remains among the poorest. People of the DRC are among the least educated in Africa because the schools have been closed for years in the face of the multiple wars and political unrest. Failure to create sufficient employment has undermined the prospects for poverty reduction. An environment conducive for human development requires an open market, a rule of law, and democratic institutions. It also requires a well-educated and informed population and people-participation in decision-making.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

Food insecurity and poverty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been explained by both national and international factors. There has been a gross underdevelopment by the diversion of economic assistance and indigenous earnings into the military and corruption. Spending on agriculture in DRC should not have been limited to inputs of seeds and fertilizer. Rather, the spending should have been invested in improving the rural infrastructure such as road, communication, schools, hospitals, bridges, recreation, and parks for tourism.

There are looming needs for food storage facilities and a transportation system that connects rural areas to cities within the DRC and between neighboring nations.

The maldistribution of wealth and income, as well as the general and gender inequality remain powerful factors in facilitating poverty in the DRC. Such inequalities are fostered by traditional land practices in the Congo, which should be abolished. These traditional practices discriminate against women's access to land and both sustain and perpetuate underdevelopment, inequality, hunger, and poverty in the Congo. The Congolese cultures tend to put women in second place, and laws should be passed to give women and men equal access to land titles in the Congo. Gender inequality, access to land, and traditional practices aimed at perpetuating gender inequality must be addressed adequately. The DRC could look to Mozambique for gender equality. Mozambique is the

first country in Africa to pass the law giving men and women equal right in obtaining land titles.

Food insecurity in DRC has been caused primarily by the lack of democracy and the unequal distribution of resources, especially land and income. The DRC needs to reduce its military spending and increase the expenditures on education, health, housing, safe drinking water, transportation, and communication systems.

The presence of corruption looms large and affects all possibilities of economic and social development in the country. The lack of democracy, the poor management, and the lack of accountability by Congolese leaders have been factors in sustaining and perpetuating poverty and food insecurity in the DRC.

An effort should be made to educate Congolese people to shift away from the traditional practices that perpetuate gender inequality, poverty, hunger, and food insecurity.

In fact, the first order priority is to address the inequality, gender inequality, unequal distribution of resources, and traditional customs and practices, which sustain poverty and underdevelopment.

At the global or international levels, the conditions for receiving aid for development from the IMF and the World Bank have resulted in the DRC cutting spending on social programs that help the poor (see earlier discussion). As a result, illiteracy has become a social problem for DRC today. Some schools in rural and urban areas in the DRC have been closed. Teachers have not been paid in years. Roads that could facilitate the moving of goods and services between towns and cities no longer exist. The health care conditions have deteriorated. The Congolese people are

experiencing extreme poverty and are dying from diseases such as malaria, measles, diarrhea, tuberculosis, and HIV/Aids, as well from the lack of drinking water, poor hygiene, lack of better living conditions, and a shortage or absence of medicine.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

In sum, the following policy actions are needed to achieve food security and alleviate poverty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Build highway networks linking rural areas to cities
- Create state and private involvement in infrastructure and human capacity building
- Establish a health care system that includes preventive and curative medicine and Health measures
- Develop water treatment systems for the delivery of clean water throughout the Country
- Disseminate information by the media on peace, public health, economy, and Social activities
- Reorganize the postal services
- Establish vaccination programs to reduce child mortality
- Develop health education programs
- Revitalize existing research institutes to start a “Green Revolution” to modernize agriculture
- Supply and encourage the use of fertilizers and other farming aids in rural areas
- Reduce military spending and increase spending on social, economic, and development activities
- Ban landmines with their negative impact on agriculture.
- Cancel the debt to foreign banks and end Structural Adjustment Programs in their current form.

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