

## The Forgotten War

Driving down the roads in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) you see roads that are sandy, bumpy, dusty and in poor condition. “Thud”. If your car breaks down or gets stuck in a ditch many people have to rush out from their houses or from the street to help pull your car out of the ditch. You might hear “Mbote,” (Hello). 300,000 people in the DRC are refugees and 1.4 million are homeless. It’s a poor country, there is a war going on between the ethnic groups. They are also fighting over a mineral, coltan. When they get the mineral they send it here to America, and we give them a small amount of money for it, which is really benefiting us but them only a little. The Democratic Republic of Congo needs help. If I were on an international assignment I would want to go to the DRC. The war has been going on for 7 years, it was expected to end 5 years ago. The world is losing focus on the problems in the DRC. Africa’s Second World War is a forgotten war.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is in need of help. Half of Congolese have no access to clean water, while we Americans have the easy job of turning on a faucet. In the DRC the chance of dying before the age of 5 is 20%. The chance of losing a loved one to violence is 25%. The percentages of people who know how to read is 67%. In America, 99% of adults learn how to read. All these struggles bring up a question: Do we deserve to be more privileged?

We are helping them, but we need to do more. There are many organizations helping the DRC for example there is, Congo Helping Hands, which tries to increase

awareness of need, improve health care, and help education for the people in the DRC. Yes, the war is being helped, it's not all negative, but you have to face it, people in the DRC are desperate for help, and we're not helping enough. When I typed in google "Is the Congo war still going on?" someone had written "Well I cannot tell you and guess what I do not care either. Some of these countries do nothing but else but go on killing people...and it baffles me because I do not think they know themselves. It appears to be in their blood from birth, and choose what, or anyone tries to do they still will continue."

The war in Congo is between ethnic groups, Kongo(48%), Sangha (20%), Teke(17%) and M'Bochi(12%). Also there is a mineral in the ground that is called coltan, which is used in our cell phones and computers. When the people in the DRC get the mineral they get money, and they want money because they are poor. 80% of coltan comes from the DRC. However, some of this mineral is buried in eastern DRC. But in order to "dig" it up they have to own the land and therefore they want the land. When they get bits of it they send 56% of it here to America and we unfortunately give them a small amount of money because they will take anything they can get because they are so poor.

A way of helping is to talk as a class and do a fundraiser, for example we could gather clothes for people in the DRC. If you send money, it will help temporary, but not like it is helping in Haiti. Haiti had a terrible earthquake and they need money to just rebuild what they already had, but in Congo, money will help a little but not in the long run. To help the county we can hold signs to stop the war. You can help by doing anyone

of these things but one of the best things you can do is to have faith and believe. If you just say “Oh we can’t help, it’s too late.” You can! Help make a difference in the world.

Why care about Congo? Why shouldn’t we just forget about Congo? If we ignore the conflict it could spread to other nations including our own. Also if you don’t try to stop the war it most likely won’t get better and therefore people will continue to get severe injuries or have to deal with the loss of a loved one. If we stop the war and remember about the war we can build a bond between our nations and trade with Congo in a fair way.

The world is forgetting about the war in Congo. Ninety percent of early deaths are due to non-violent, preventable causes including malnutrition, infections and more. People in Congo live in poverty, which means they can’t pay for doctor expenses to help seek for medical help. Thirty times as many people have died in Congo than in the Haiti earthquake. People in the DRC want to be helped, why not start now? People have had to be evacuated including my grandparents, aunt, uncle, and cousins. My cousins were about 2 and 4, and if you look at their smiles in a photo I have of them they look happy and they look like they had faith. Of course they didn’t really know what was going on because they were young, but they were in high spirits. And that was in 1991 and people in Congo still believe things will get better. If they didn’t believe, they would give up and they’re not giving up, so why should we?

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