

# Foreword

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The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of raw materials: rare earths, coltan, cobalt, copper, gold, diamonds, wood, water. Given its incredible resources the country should be one of the most prosperous on the African continent. The reality, however, as revealed by even a cursory glance at the main wealth indicators, from the UN's Human Development Index to economic indicators such as gross domestic product or per capita income, is different. Recurring reports of bloody fighting in the East of the country have made it abundantly clear in recent years that mineral wealth can be both a blessing and a curse. When collective goods such as mineral deposits and the revenues they generate benefit only a small group of powerful people and their hangers-on to the exclusion of other ethnic and social groups, massive conflict ensues. If assets are shared more fairly, they can open up huge opportunities for economic and social development which benefit not only a small powerful elite and their clients but the population as a whole.

The Federal Republic of Germany has been working in partnership with the Democratic Republic of the Congo for a long time to encourage sustainable and inclusive development. The goals of bilateral development assistance are wide-ranging and include bringing peace to and demilitarising Eastern Congo, protecting and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and providing support for police training.

Germany has participated in several EU civilian and military missions and actually led the EUFOR RD Congo mission. This mission helped to bring about the first democratic parliamentary elections since 1960 in 2006. During his visit to the country at the beginning of 2015, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier inaugurated the new runway at Goma Airport, which was renovated with German assistance – an important piece of the jigsaw to boost economic development in the eastern part of the country beset by conflict and natural disasters.

The opening of the new liaison office of the Goethe-Institut in Kinshasa a year ago shows that relations between Germany and Congo are also being deepened in the cultural and social sphere – and must be deepened further still. Education is the key to economic, social and cultural development in the world of the 21st century for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, too, if the country wants to shape its own future. Vocational education, the training of skilled workers for industry

and the craft sector, has a particularly vital role to play in setting in motion processes of economic modernisation and creating a sustainable industrial basis for positive economic development.

The aim of this volume is to highlight the opportunities and prospects for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also the problems and challenges the country faces. It examines not only the purely economic or political prospects but also health and environmental aspects as well as civil society and education as drivers of progress.

In preparing this edited volume, the publishers have assembled not only German and European academics but also Asian and a large number of African voices. The Forum Afrikazentrum of the University of Würzburg, of which the publishers are part and which provided the initiative for this publication, has also through this volume been able to deepen its institutional contacts in the Congo as the authors include members of the Congolese universities in Kinshasa, Bukavu, Kikwit and Lubumbashi.

The edited volume is therefore itself an expression of the potential afforded by partnership-based cooperation which facilitates long-term contacts and academic working relations between those involved, mostly young researchers from three continents and their universities. As well as making a valuable interdisciplinary contribution to the academic debate, this international networking and collaboration between young academics is also a sign of positive development in the cultural relations between Congolese society and its international partners, whether in Africa, Asia or Europe.

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“Money, if you use it, comes to an end. Learning, if you use it, increases” – this is a proverb in Swahili, one of the five main national languages of the Congo. It points towards one of the most important perspectives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is dominated by crises: Education is the key to sustainable social and economic development in the country, which holds one of the lowest ranks on the global Human Development Index despite its vast amount of natural resources. Only education has the power to create an inner change in this culturally diverse nation in the heart of the African continent.

This idea is the starting point of our joint, very successful Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC (Bourse d’Excellence Bringmann aux Universités Congolaises), which was started at the Université de Kinshasa in 2008. The excellence scholarship allows outstanding students at universities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to study fast and efficiently in order to then pursue a fruitful academic career. We are very proud to support nearly 180 scholarship holders at 16 universities, six high schools, and two primary schools in the Congo with the help of the foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung. We encourage our scholarship holders to reflect and exercise self-criticism and expect them, as the future professors, to pass the values of BEBUC to the coming generation of students. This is not only about the accumulation of knowledge, but especially about the development of humanist values, the exchange between Africa and the rest of the world on equal terms as well as the encouragement of a reflective and critical discussion of one’s own and others’ standpoints, which ideally will create a change of perspective.

With the realisation of the present outstanding publication, this ideal case has occurred in the scientific discourse around the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The different contributions of authors from the Congo, Germany, India, Cameroon, Belgium, Norway, and South Korea offer the reader such a change in perspective through a reflective and critical analysis. The present volume first sheds light on the diverse problems that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing. However, the analysis of these problems is only a first step and serves as the starting point for the subsequent discussion of the potentials and perspectives in the second and third step. The goal is to take a differentiated view on this country, which is so incredibly rich at a cultural, historical, and social level. The methodical approach of each contribution and the interdisciplinary approach of the volume

aim to draw a picture of the Congo that reaches beyond the well-known and often cited problems of poverty, war, and corruption.

We are – as much as the authors and publishers of this volume, who deserve special praise! – more than convinced that the Congolese are able to build up their country by their own strength. This will indisputably happen when the Congolese population analyses the various problems of the country and turns to its virtually inexhaustible own potentials. Then, this unique country with its wonderful people will have a real perspective.

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