







The Contributions of the Non-Profit Sector to the Economy and the Creation of Dignified and Fulfilling Work for Youths in the Democratic Republic Of Congo

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ABSTRACT

This literature review examines the contribution of the non-profit sector to the economy and the creation of dignified and fulfilling jobs for youths in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is based mainly on documentary research, even if very few papers have been published on this topic. The direct contribution of non-profit organisations (NPOs) to youth employment remains unclear due to insufficient data regarding NPOs' roles in providing dignified and meaningful work. In this context, evaluating their contribution to job creation for marginalised youth, especially those living with disabilities, becomes even more difficult. The literature shows that the NPOs generate few direct jobs, their main contribution lies in strengthening the employability of young people through training, mentoring, entrepreneurship support, and advocacy for their inclusion. However, this study highlights a darker reality: the opportunities created are often precarious, characterised by shortterm contracts, low salaries, and heavy dependence on external funding, pushing a large proportion of young people into the informal sector just to survive. Furthermore, the glaring lack of reliable quantitative data prevents an accurate assessment of the sector's impact. Although NPOs represent a beacon of hope and an indispensable partner in addressing the country's structural shortcomings, their capacity to intervene is relatively weak, partly due to their reliance on foreign donors. Additionally, they are further hindered by the political environment in which they operate. This review highlights the urgent need for an integrated approach, combining coherent public policies, strengthened partnerships between the state, the private sector, and civil society, and structural transformation of the economy, so that the potential of Congolese youth can finally be fully realised.

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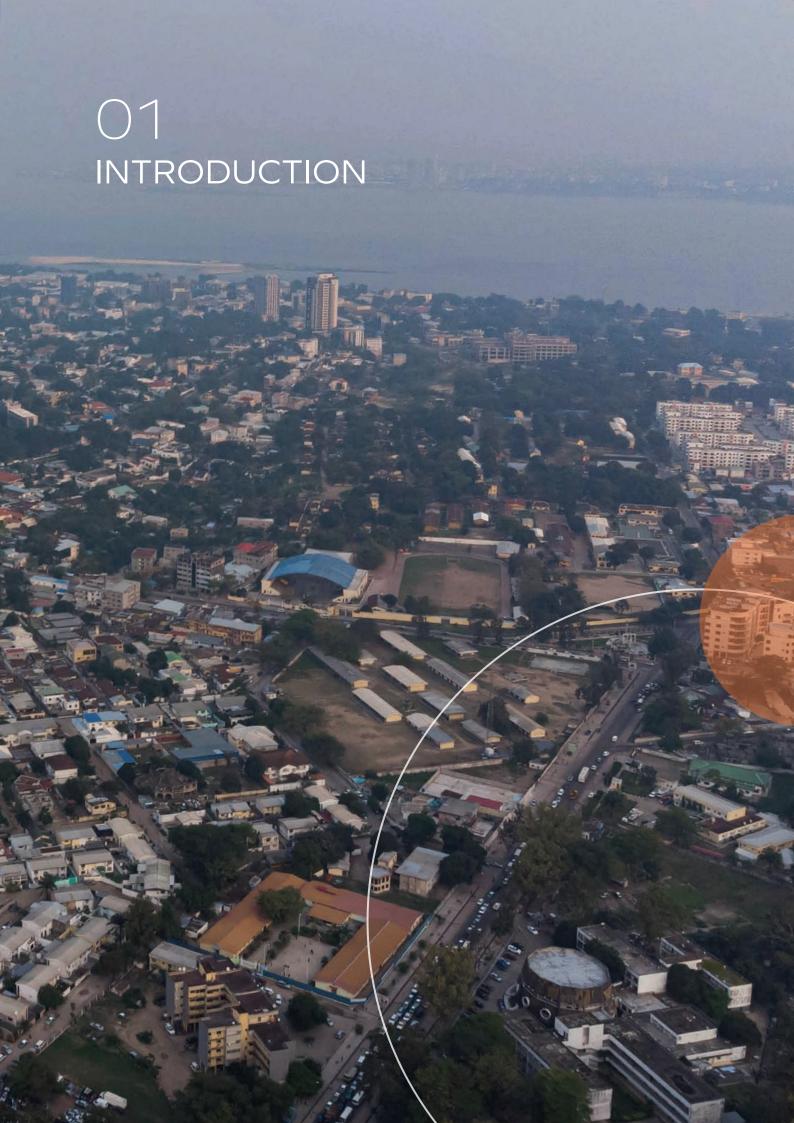
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
HIMO	High-intensity Labour System
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NPOs	Non-profit Organisations
ONEM	National Employment Office



Ithough global youth unemployment has been trending downward for the past 15 years, reaching 13 per cent in 2023, according to the United Nations (ONU Info, 2024), many young people still struggle to access dignified and fulfilling employment. The number of young people, who are neither employed nor in education or training, remains high. Limited access to education and vocational training particularly, affects developing countries' youth. Implementing targeted strategies and policies remains essential to creating decent jobs that meet the labour market's needs. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is no exception. For over thirty years, the country has experienced a high rate of poverty. According to the World Bank (2023), its poverty rate stood at 63 percent, that is, the percentage of the population that lives on less than \$1.9 per day. For many years, the DRC has been unable to meet certain essential needs, particularly access to employment. The Congolese economy has suffered severe damage from years of conflict between the national army and rebel groups, particularly in the eastern region, where insecurity has persisted since the liberation war of 1997 (Balencie & de La Grange, 2005). In addition, the region has faced natural disasters and health crises, such as the Nyiragongo volcano eruption and Ebola virus outbreaks (Geirsson et al., 2017). These crises and governance challenges have contributed to the deterioration of an already fragile economy.

Since independence, the economy of the DRC has been mismanaged. Poor governance and corruption, underinvestment in the Congolese people, and poor service delivery are the defining future of the country. In this context, the majority of people in the country live in precarious situations; a life of misery and hopelessness. These provide a fertile ground for urban youth violence. According to Kalulu (2011), the high concentration of idle, unemployed youth in cities creates social and political tensions, leading to violence. The country has not been able to turn its greatest asset, the youth, into an opportunity for development. As the United Nations Population Fund observed, the young Congolese population should be seen as an opportunity to be seized (UNFPA, 2016) to

drive development. However, the state has failed to capitalize on this, resulting in high unemployment and underemployment in the country, especially among the youth.

Despite the various national reconstruction programs, such as the 'Five Projects', annual initiatives, and the *Document de Stratégie de Croissance et de Réduction de la Pauvreté* (DSCRP) (Document on Strategy of Growth and Poverty Reduction), there has been minimal progress in alleviating the hardships faced by the population. This lack of improvement can be partly attributed to resource mismanagement by leaders and the limited involvement of the public in the management of public affairs. Due to the state's shortcomings, communities have established self-help mechanisms, and now

As the United Nations
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depend on non-profit organisations (NPOs) to carry out various humanitarian and development initiatives. As a result, numerous non-profit initiatives have emerged that complement government efforts, especially in health, education, and community development (Bongo-Pasi, 2020).

Today, the important role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in societal development is widely acknowledged. Initially, NGOs focused mainly on emergency and humanitarian responses and other specific crises. However, they have increasingly expanded their activities into the socio-economic intervention sector, establishing a distinct identity within the development landscape and among donors. Despite this progress, uncertainties still exist around the extent of these organisations' contributions to youth job creation. The public and private sectors have struggled to provide enough formal employment opportunities for the rapidly growing youth population. There has been a lack of investment in industrial, commercial, agricultural, and service sectors that could create jobs. Despite economic growth averaging seven percent over the past two decades, this growth has not translated into sufficient employment for youth (Ngonga & Tombola, 2015). Consequently, attention has shifted to other entities, particularly NPOs, to help bridge this gap.

This literature review examines the non-profit sector's contribution to creating dignified and fulfilling jobs for young people in DRC. This task is challenging due to the limited research on this specific topic. Most studies on job creation focus on the private or informal sectors. The non-profit sector is mentioned in the literature, but its role in job creation has yet to be explored. This gap in research presents an intriguing opportunity for further exploration and understanding.

This review is organised into seven sections. The first section contextualises NPOs in the DRC in relations to youth employment, the second covers the non-prof sector's contributions to youth employment, and section three deals with the contributions of the sector to dignified and fulfilling work. Section four details the sub-sectors where NPOs

contribute to dignified and fulfilling work for young people, followed by section five that covers the knowledge gaps revealed by the review. Section six addresses the challenges and opportunities facing NPOs in contributing to dignified and fulfilling jobs for the youth, and the concluding section seven summarises the key issues from the review.

1.1 Conceptualisation and Contextualisation of NPOs in the DRC

It is important to clarify the meaning of the non-profit sector and the legal framework within which it operates. In the DRC, the non-profit sector began to take shape during the colonial period, emphasising delivering sustainable development solutions that addressed local realities and directly involved communities in project development. This approach gave the population a voice in analysing their needs and finding tailored solutions. Through this role, NGOs amplify the views and perspectives of different groups, particularly young men and women, on issues that affect them, such as their livelihoods. These NPOs include various groups such as NGOs, community-based organisations, and trade unions. An NGO is a legally recognised, non-profit association focused on promoting social, cultural, and economic development within local communities. By law, NGOs in the DRC concentrate on humanitarian issues and clearly define their areas of intervention in alignment with the national policy objectives for economic, social, and cultural development¹. NGOs do not participate in commercial or industrial activities, nor do they seek material gain for their members. Any financial benefits must be incidental, as seen in the case of social enterprises. By definition, NGOs are apolitical and operate within the social, educational, economic, or cultural sectors.

The origins of NGOs in the DRC can be traced back to the 1930s, a significant period during the colonial era. It was during this time that organisations like the Kivu Social Fund in 1931, the Salvation Army in 1934, and the Scientific and Medical Center of the Free University of Brussels in 1938 (Longange, 2002) began their operations. The sector's activities were initially regulated by decree laws, such as the 1956 decree on cooperatives and the 1959 decree on non-profit associations. Additionally, missionary churches, Catholic, Protestant, and Kimbanguist, played a significant role in local development through charitable work that served underprivileged communities. They established schools, hospitals, health centres, and social facilities (Shuku, 1998), becoming a critical element in the 'Colonial Trilogy', along with the State and private enterprises, for advancing colonial projects (Lututala, 2017).

NGOs in the DRC are regulated by the 2006 Constitution and Law No. 004-2001 of July 20, 2001, which sets general rules for non-profit associations and public utility institutions. For example, the law requires foreign NGOs operating in the DRC to sign a framework agreement with the Ministry of Planning, provide documentation for expatriate staff, and certificate of good conduct, which among others ensure that at least 60 per cent of their workforce comprises local employees².

Like in other parts of the world, NPOs is increasingly recognised for creating economic opportunities for young people. It engages them in employment, entrepreneurship, and skills training, amplifying their voices, and supporting initiatives that promote their economic well-being and career fulfilment. This sector includes NGOs, community-based organisations, trade unions, associations, and professional organisations. Its role in employment creation is the focus of this review.



 $^{1 \}quad \underline{\text{https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit\%20Public/loi0042001.20.07.2001.asbl.htm}}\\$

² https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20Public/loi0042001.20.07.2001.asbl.htm

1.2 Government and NPO Relations in DRC

The state involves NGOs in designing and implementing development policies at local, provincial, and national levels. NGOs take into account local needs and align their activities with government development guidelines. In addition to local NGOs, international NGOs are working to train and empower Congolese nationals, promote project management skills among local residents, and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology expertise. NGOs are encouraged to involve grassroots communities in defining and implementing development initiatives. While NGOs maintain their independence, they must submit regular reports detailing their finances and activities to the Ministry of Planning and the appropriate sectoral ministry. Although the government offers some support to NGOs, including tax exemption, it does not interfere with their management. Some of the support that the government provides to NGOs include the following:



- Tax exemptions as per current legislation;
- Exemptions from duties on imported goods and equipment related to their mission;
- Assistance in obtaining residence permits for foreign staff and their families;
- · Authorisation to use radio equipment and frequencies; and
- Simplified procedures with the Congolese Control Office.

The Ministry of Planning provides these facilities once NGOs receive legal recognition and are formalised through an inter-ministerial decree involving the Ministries of Planning and Finance, alongside input from relevant sectoral ministries. However, the country's NPOs face several challenges, ranging from administrative to legal, in both their formation and operation. These challenges are often due to limited access to or understanding of relevant legal requirements, leading to frequent non-compliance with legal responsibilities. This non-compliance restrains relations with public authorities, erodes their credibility with the public, and hinders their growth³.

To establish a non-profit association legally in the DRC, the organisation must obtain a legal personality, granted by the Minister of Justice with input from the sector-specific ministry. The process for requesting legal personality involves submitting the following documents in duplicate, with signatures from members responsible for administration or management, to the Minister of Justice:



- A list of the association's active members, detailing names, addresses, and signed by those responsible for administration or management.
- A declaration, signed by the majority, containing members' names, professions, and domiciles, specifying those managing the association.
- The association's notarized and signed statutes.
- Certificates of good conduct for all active members responsible for management.
- A statement of the association's resources aimed at achieving its objectives, updated semi-annually as required by Article 19.

For foreign NPOs, the steps of prior notice and registration with the sector-specific ministry are not only necessary, but crucial, before obtaining authorisation from the Minister of Justice. The association's legal personality, granted in the DRC, aligns with the legal status conferred in the country where the organisation's headquarters is located. However, it does not extend beyond the rights available to Congolese associations.

1.3 Context of Employment of Youth in the DRC

Youth employment in the DRC shows a notable level of early labour force participation, especially among the 15- to 19-year age group. According to the 2013-2014 Demographic and Health Survey, 41 per cent of young women and 37 per cent of young men in this age group were already working, with fewer than seven per cent unemployed at the time of the survey. This early entry into the workforce often stems from economic necessity, as young people seek to support household income, meet personal or family needs, or fund their education. Interestingly, a higher proportion of young women than young men were working, suggesting that girls may face greater social or familial pressure to contribute financially. Consequently, young Congolese individuals begin working to support household survival, achieve independence, finance their education, and foster a sense of self-worth. This is essential for their social integration.

³ https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20Public/loi0042001.20.07.2001.asbl.htm



TABLE 1: Employment by Gender (2013-2014)

A = 0 = 10 = 10	Percentage who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey				Percentage who did not work	
Age group (years)	Percentage working at the time of the survey		Percentage not working at the time of the survey		in the 12 months preceding the survey	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
15-19	40.9	37.1	4.5	6.6	54.6	56.2
20-24	61.7	65.5	5.6	9.7	32.6	24.7
25-29	75.3	84.8	5.8	8.3	18.8	6.9
30-34	78.7	93.6	4.7	3.1	18.4	3.4
35-39	79.1	94.4	5.4	2.8	15.5	2.8
40-44	82.3	95.4	4.5	2.9	13.1	1.7
45-49	82.2	94.9	5.1	3.4	12.6	1.7
Together	67.2	74.8	5.1	5.9	27.7	19.3

Source: EDS-RDC (2013-2014; pp 47-48p. xx)

In the DRC, young people's employment is primarily concentrated in informal and small-scale businesses. According to a survey conducted in Kinshasa, about 60 per cent of adolescent girls aged 12 to 24 years who work are engaged in small business activities, whereas 34.3 per cent of adolescent boys work in similar roles. Boys are more likely than girls to work in private companies, with 13.7 per cent of working boys employed in such settings compared to only 5.8 per cent of girls. It is important to note that children as young as 12 years old who are working is an indication of child labour. Employment in non-commercial sectors, such as international institutions, associations, and households, is uncommon for both genders, with only 1.3 per cent of working adolescent girls and 1.7 per cent of boys in these positions. Most young people in this demographic are self-employed in various types of work; however, they often lack formal job protection and experience inconsistent pay.

There is a notable gender-based division of labour. Specific roles, like hairdressing, beautician services, and sewing, are typically performed by adolescent girls, while boys primarily fill roles like mechanics, carpentry, and masonry. This gender-based division of labour reflects entrenched societal norms and underscores the vulnerability of youth in the labour market. Youth in these subsectors earn lower wages and lack protections (Ministry of Planning DRC, 2020).

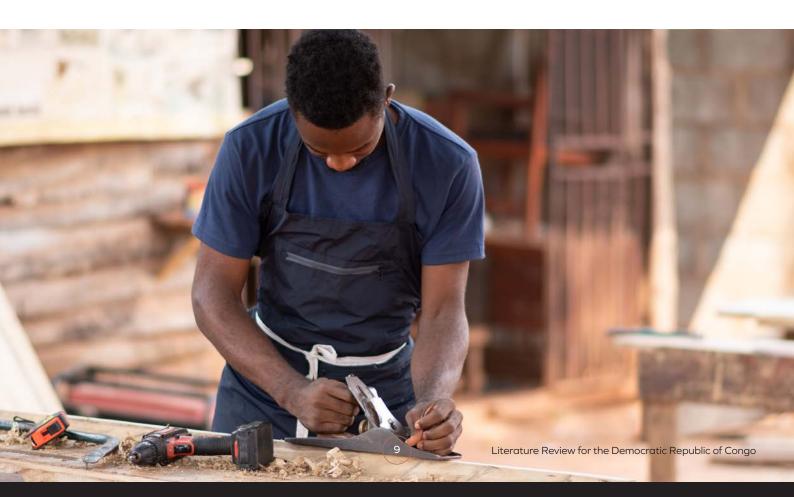


TABLE 2: Employment activity of adolescent girls and boys in Kinshasa (2016)

Sectors of activity	Percentage of adolescent girls (12-24 years old)	Percentage of adolescent boys (12-24 years old)
No activity	77.5	82.4
Small business	13.6	6.3
Employee of a public company	0.3	0.3
Employee of a private company	1.2	2.4
Employee of an international institution	0.1	0.3
Employee of an association	0.0	0.3
Employee in a household	0.3	0.3
Hairdresser	3.6	0.8
Beautician	1.3	0.0
Dressmaker	1.5	0.3
Mechanic	0.0	0.8
Carpenter	0.0	0.3
Mason	0.0	1.4
Other	0.6	4.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: EQP survey from La Pépinière 2016.

Faced with the shortage of formal salaried jobs, most young Congolese people get by in small businesses. At the same time, they would have liked to work in formal private companies, as indicated by the *la Pépinière* survey (Social Development, UKaid & CERED-GL, 2017). This survey indicates that young university graduates have more difficulty finding employment in the informal sector than others. The projection is that by 2030, the DRC's population will reach at least 120 million, with the majority being young people (Family Planning Country Action Evaluation, n.d.). A predominantly youthful population necessitates more employment opportunities, highlighting the need for urgent intervention.





he difficulties that young people have in accessing employment are of four types: (i) imbalances between supply and demand for employment, (ii) the mismatch between the education system and the requirements of the job market, (iii) the absence of a macroeconomic and sectoral policy likely to promote job creation, and (iv) the unfavourable economic situation (CEDESURK and OIF, 2019).

Regarding the imbalances between supply and demand for employment, it should be noted that very few salaried jobs are created in the DRC. In 2018, only 14.5 per cent of those employed were in paid employment. Of those employed, 75 percent were self-employed in the informal sector. Those in paid employment aged between 15 and 24 years, and 25 and 34 years were 4.6 per cent and 15.8 per cent respectively (INS, 2018). These low rates suggest once again that most young people work in precarious and/or non-salaried jobs – mostly self-employed. There are few paid jobs in the country. In this situation, those in the labour force, especially young people, experienced difficulties finding a job in the labour market.

TABLE 3: Employment indicators in DRC

Indicator	Proportions (%)
Proportion of the working population in vulnerable employment	61.20
Salary rate	14.50
Informality rate	71.0
Visible underemployment rate	76.0
Invisible underemployment rate	53.3
Overall underemployment rate	85.7

Source: INS-QUIBB Survey, 2018

Another indicator of the weakness of the private and parastatal sectors in job creation is given by the National Employment Office (ONEM). Table 4 indicates that between 2003 and 2012, the public and private sectors combined could only provide jobs to 7.61 per cent of applicants. Over the years, the number of employment opportunities available through these organisations has varied. For example, the percentage of applicants who secured jobs rose from 6.2 per cent in 2009 to 28.73 per cent in 2012. This increase may be attributed to several factors, such as declining applicants or improved economic conditions.

TABLE 4: Placement rate of job seekers registered with ONEM

Year	Number of registered job seekers	Number of candidates placed in employment	Placement rate
2003	2721	0	0
2004	6582	69	1.46
2005	6665	704	10.56
2006	10575	705	6.67
2007	8142	687	8.44
2008	67889	536	0.79
2009	17609	1148	6.52
2010	17618	2983	16.93
2011	9787	2465	25.19
2012	9007	2588	28.73
Total	156595	11885	7.61

Source: Mangalu et al. (2013)

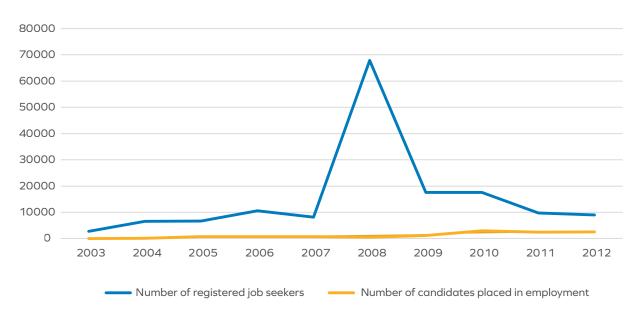


FIGURE 1: Job seekers registered and candidates placed

Source: Mangalu et al. (2013)

It should be noted that since 1958, two years before the independence of the country, public sector contribution to employment has declined, while the informal sector, especially self-employment, has increased. In the immediate post-independent period, the public contributed significantly to employment because it was the main provider of public goods to citizens. However, there has been a consistent trend in employment between the formal and informal sectors. The latter contribution to employment is always higher than that of the former.

The contribution of the public and private sectors to job creation in the DRC is fairly well known. The first studies date back to 1970 (Dupriez & Ngoie, 1970); these authors show that during the first years of independence, salaried jobs were less than independent jobs: 33 per cent in 1958, and slightly more numerous in 1968 (59 per cent). The explanation is that in independent jobs, there were free workers in the agricultural sector, that is, workers in large agricultural companies paid by the task, and peasants who sold the products of their fields or their harvests to trading companies (Dupriez & Ngoie, 1970). However, the proportion of formal, salaried jobs was still appreciable. In 1958, the volume of salaried labour was 1,102,270 employees for Congolese male population over 15 years of age of 3,646,811 inhabitants, or 30 per cent of the active population (DRC-UNDP, n.d.).

Since the early 1990s, paid employment has significantly declined (UNDP, n.d). Currently, only 4.6 per cent of workers are in paid employment. This situation stems from the period immediately following independence, until the late 1980s, when paid employment primarily existed within the civil service, state-owned enterprises, and large-scale private companies. However, since the 1990s, particularly after the looting incidents of 1991 and 1993, the economic structure has been shattered, leading to the closure of numerous companies and resulting in millions of workers becoming unemployed. Additionally, these events have contributed to a decrease in foreign investment, which could have spurred industrialisation in the country. The lack of industrial development has hindered the creation of formal employment opportunities.

This trend has continued, and the Congolese industrial sector has not recovered. Indeed, despite the appreciable growth rate of its economy, which has averaged seven per cent between 2005 and 2015. Economic growth is said to be inclusive when it improves economic development in a sustainable manner for the greatest number of people, regions, and countries, while protecting vulnerable groups, in an environment of equity, equal justice, and political plurality (AfDB, 2012 cited in Mabaya, Mwamba and Matata, 2015). Economic growth in DRC is not inclusive to the extent that it has not created sufficient jobs for young people: the rate of job creation remains low compared to the growth of the working-age population (Ngonga & Tombola, 2015).

Several initiatives have been launched to promote the creation of youth jobs in the formal sectors (Ngonga & Tombola, 2015), including the following:

• A youth employment promotion program in 2010, in which competitive recruitment of university graduates for public administration was launched;

- A one-stop centre for business creation was established in 2012 to simplify the process of creating businesses, which should increase the demand for work; and
- A vast program of agro-industrial parks to, among other things, stimulate employment was launched.

Other strategies, aimed at creating youth employment, have been promoted, namely, (i) ending the war of aggression (which dates back to 1997) (ii) developing structural policies to promote employment and productivity in the agricultural sector, with a focus on the development of agro-industrial parks; (iii) promoting the creation of free zones in areas well-endowed with natural resources; (iv) developing youth entrepreneurship and the incubation of their businesses; and (v) promoting access to financial resources for young people (Ngonga & Tombola, 2015). Despite these initiatives, the 1-2-3 surveys conducted in 2012 showed that the unemployment rate remained very high: 52.2 per cent for the 15 to 34 year age group. In 2018, the unemployment rate was 11.4 per cent in urban areas and 41.7 per cent for people aged 25 to 34 years (INS, 2018).

In conclusion, the formal sector (public sector, industry, etc.) is not contributing to creating enough jobs, especially for the youth. Ngonga and Tombola (2015) also point out that individual initiatives currently account for 65 per cent of jobs in the Congolese economy, while the private sector provides 19 per cent and the public sector contributes 16 per cent. Most self-employed individuals work in the informal agricultural sector, which consists of small family production units averaging two people, as well as in the non-agricultural informal sector, which includes small, unregistered, and non-productive activities. The informal agricultural sector employs approximately 59.7

per cent of the workforce, while the non-agricultural informal sector employs about 30 per cent (Ngonga & Tombola, 2015).

The self-employed has been the subject of at least two doctoral theses in Economic Sciences (Mufungizi, 2021; Makiese, 2017), while several other works explore the issue of self-employment in the informal sector (Mulumbwa, 2014; Kimpolo, 2014, & Mokuinema, 2014). Mufungizi (2021) reported on the activities of the NPO, the Plateforme Diobass, which was created in 1996, among other things, to promote the professional integration of young people through three projects: Jeunes du Kivu, Jeunes et Réhabilitation, and Jeunes et métiers. The objective was to facilitate the reintegration of young people through spaces for exchanges and the realization of socio-economic activities in which they felt collectively involved (Mufungizi, 2021). The number of young people involved in these projects is estimated

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to be around one thousand. Particular attention has been paid to the vocational training of young people engaged in productive activities, to promote their reintegration and self-care in the labour market.

The first conclusion is that the self-employed and the non-profit private sector contribute to creating jobs for young people either directly or indirectly. The direct contribution consists of recruiting and employing young people. These recruitments are relatively small in number. The indirect contribution consists of giving young people employability skills through training and internships, as Mufungizi (2021) showed. Accordingly, there is a need to explore alternative avenues for promoting youth employment. To this end, some scholars have called for measures to promote inclusive economic growth. This will require institutional partnership between the State and the private sector, opening up the competition of several sectors of commercial activities hitherto reserved solely for public institutions (Mabaya et al., 2013).

2.1 Contributions of the Informal Non-profit Sector

Makiese (2017) emphasises the importance of including statistics on self-employed workers when analysing employment trends in the DRC, particularly regarding the issue of segmented informality of employment. He highlights the significant role of self-employment in the DRC, defining self-employed as individuals who have established their own informal businesses. These self-employed jobs are further segmented based on various factors, including motivation: those seeking survival (lower segment), individuals facing unemployment and desiring independence (intermediate segment), and those pursuing better income opportunities (upper segment).

Makiese (2017) also highlights the challenges faced by organisations in facilitating effective intermediation between job providers and job seekers. Key institutions involved include the *Institut National de Préparation*

Professionnelle (National Institute for Professional Preparation), the National Institute for Social Security, ONEM, the National Program for Youth Employment, and the Framework Program for Income Creation. For example, from 2003 to 2012, the ONEM registered 156 595 job seekers but succeeded to place only 11 912 candidates into employment, illustrating the system inefficiencies in labour market intermediation (Makiese, 2017).

Kimpola (2014) drew attention to child labour in Brazzaville, specifically noting that children engaged in selling water in sachets represent a response to the government's inability to generate sufficient employment opportunities, as well as the pervasive poverty and socio-economic crises. Similarly, Mulumbwa (2014) and Mokuinema (2014) emphasised the importance of addressing child labour in the DRC, highlighting its implications for socio-economic development and human rights.

2.2 Contributions of the Non-profit Sector

The non-profit sector is often overlooked in job creation statistics, with the literature typically focusing on the public and private sectors, and the self-employed. This lack of recognition has made gathering information on the non-profit sector challenging. However, it also underscores the unique and significant contribution of this project, which aims to shed light on this underappreciated sector. The non-profit sector primarily consists of NGOs, associations, and religious organisations. The sector's organisations aim to improve people's livelihoods by providing access to education, healthcare, and other essential services that the government has failed to provide.

2.3 Contributions of NGOs to Youth Employment

Since independence, several secular NPOs have been created in the DRC, partly due to the state's failure to provide basic services to its people (Shuku, 1998). As indicated earlier, NPO's in DRC are governed by the ordinance-law of September 18, 1965, governing NPOs. Recently, the government elaborated the National Action Plan for the Youth Employment (*Plan d'Action National pour l'Emploi des Jeunes*); its objective is to promote the opportunities of jobs and the self-employment for the youth, reinforce their employability, increase the decent job opportunities for young people, and promote entrepreneurship. Most NPOs could not provide records of the number of jobs created and youth recruited. The numbers of NPOs in the country has increased since the 1990s for the end of one-party political system and the enthronement of multiple party democracy. According to Ndambo (2010), the number of NGOs increased from 450 in 1990 to 4 700 in 2010.

NPOs employ staff, primarily young people, to design and implement their programs and projects. This approach directly creates employment opportunities for youth. However, the number of jobs generated by this sector is not well documented. There are no statistics available regarding the number of project staff, making it difficult to assess the overall jobs created by these organisations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that NPOs create only a limited number of jobs and that some organisations rely on unpaid volunteers.

Four programs can be mentioned:

- The FAO-ONUDI program for the creation of jobs on agro-industry and entrepreneurship⁴;
- The MOSALA Centre program for creating job opportunities for young people⁵;
- The Jeunes Banquiers Program; and
- The Program for Young Scholars⁶.

Besides direct jobs created, NPOs also contribute to creating indirect jobs, particularly for the youth and women in the DRC. They achieve this through training or skills development to facilitate young people's access to employment. In addition, NPOs offer young people volunteering and professional internship opportunities (INS, 2018; Mufungizi, 2021). These initiatives offer young people the first opportunity to familiarise themselves with the world of work, enabling them to, among others, gain practical skills. Among these NPOs, the National Institute for Professional Preparation operates 45 training centres around the country, and many others working



⁵ https://www.congomonde.cd/rdc-le-centre-mosala-nouvelles-opportunite-demplois-pour-les-jeunes-congolais



^{6 &}lt;u>https://congojob.cd/offres-demploi-pour-les-jeunes-diplomes-en-rdc</u>

as incubators to help young people to create their own enterprises. Some are listed at https://congosupportpme.com/category/incubateurs like: Parole des Opprimés, Réseau pour le Développement Intégral du Congo, Réseau National des Femmes Rurales, Réseau des Coachs Professionnels en Entrepreneuriat du Congo.

2.4 Contribution of Community Dynamics

Nyange (2010) attempted to assess the non-profit sector's contribution to the fight against poverty. The research centred on participatory community development, or community dynamics: mutual societies, unions, cooperatives, multi-sector associations, NGOs supporting grassroots initiatives, and grassroots organisations. "The community dynamics approach is intended to be a process for developing a poverty reduction program that uses, within the framework of a participatory partnership, community organisations as relay structures in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the poverty reduction program" (Nyange, 2010, p. 120). The micro-projects implemented under this community dynamics framework were noted to enable the creation of short-term employment through the high-intensity labour system (HIMO). However, "these jobs remain precarious, especially since they are linked to the duration of the execution of a project" (Nyange, 2010: p. 123).

Nyange further highlights an important issue that is often overlooked in the literature on NPOs. While much of the existing scholarship emphasises the role of NPOs in job creation, Nyange argued that the funding management systems governing these organisations impede the development of productive entrepreneurship. To illustrate this point, Nyange cites an example of an income-generating project; out of 37 income-generating activities initiated under this project, 73 per cent ceased operations. Additionally, the remaining 10 per cent encountered significant challenges in covering operational costs and lacked adequate working capital to sustain their activities (Nyange, 2010: p. 124). Additionally, Nyange identified several factors that impede the effective functioning of community dynamics: reliance on donors, unqualified facilitators, conflicts in leadership, perception of NGOs as mere survival mechanisms, personalisation of roles and responsibilities, fragmentation and lack of integration of activities within a broader vision, and cultural influences.



2.5 Contribution of Churches

Makwala (2010) highlighted that churches in the DRC have played an indirect role in combating poverty through various initiatives. These include development programs, adult education, protection of vulnerable populations, emergency management, rehabilitation of basic infrastructure, and strengthening community self-promotion efforts. Specific actions such as micro-credit programs, enhancing food security, and promoting participatory management of natural resources have also been significant. Additionally, churches have focused on capacity building for development actors and establishing a bank for development projects. Through these efforts, NPOs have contributed to job creation for young people in the DRC. For example, the Catholic Church have recently created a financial institution for development projects.

2.6 Contributions of the Non-profit Sector to Youth Entrepreneurship

Many NGOs are engaged in programs that promote entrepreneurship. They provide mentoring, coaching, and sometimes funding for young people who aspire to become entrepreneurs. A notable example is the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, which offers various forms of support to young individuals pursuing careers in agriculture (Musamuna, 2002). Additionally, the African Development Bank has implemented youth entrepreneurship projects in agriculture and agribusiness across thirty African countries, including the DRC (Shuku, 1998). A further example is the Entrepreneurship Project for Youths on Agricultural and Agro-Business, which aims to create favourable conditions for the creation and management by young people of successful agrobusiness enterprises and development of a political, organisational, and institutional framework favourable to the promotion and development of these enterprises.⁷

Young people in the DRC are playing an important role in building community structures through cooperatives and political engagement. As Hartley (2011) pointed out, cooperatives provide economic opportunities and foster personal development and collective action among young people who represent a significant population in sub-Saharan Africa, including DRC. These structures allow young people to access financing and develop their skills, which improves their socio-economic status.

Young people are increasingly engaging in entrepreneurial initiatives, often supported by incubators like *I&F Entrepreneuriat* in Mbanza-Ngungu. These programs assist young people in developing their businesses, which helps create jobs and contributes to the local economy. *I&F Entrepreneuriat* was established by Val Masamba

in 2013 as part of his doctoral research. In his thesis, Masamba distinguished between different types of entrepreneurship: early entrepreneurship, which involves dominant groups close to those in power who became entrepreneurs through *Zairianisation*; opportunistic entrepreneurship, characterised by gifted Congolese individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit; survival entrepreneurship, which operates within the informal sector; and insecurity entrepreneurship, involving actors in the predatory economy, including warlords (Masamba, 2013). Many young people today are investing in entrepreneurship and achieving independence. However, it is not known how many jobs are created for other young people who work with them.

Public policies that promote entrepreneurial education and skills development are crucial for fostering youth entrepreneurship, especially in regions with high unemployment rates.

Mentoring programs are vital support measures that help young entrepreneurs navigate the challenges of starting a business.

However, the absence of a structured mentoring system poses a significant challenge in the DRC, like other countries on the African continent. Additionally, public policies that promote entrepreneurial education and skills development are crucial for fostering youth entrepreneurship, especially in regions with high unemployment rates. Reforming the DRC educational system is also a highly desired initiative. Despite these efforts, evidence shows that while support initiatives are in place, their effectiveness in significantly increasing youth entrepreneurship rates is mixed. Although the voluntary sector makes a positive contribution, systemic challenges in the country continue to exist and require ongoing attention and improvement.

⁷ https://www.faapa.info/blog/rdc-bad-projet-dentrepreneuriat-des-jeunes-pour-promouvoir-lagriculture/

The literature review indicates that the Congolese educational system at both primary and secondary school and university levels does not adequately prepare young people for employability or entrepreneurship. Some scholars have noted that trained individuals often face challenges in starting their own businesses, as they tend to rely on the hope of securing formal employment in the private or public sectors instead (Enguta, 2020; PASEC, 2021).

In addition, the review showed that young entrepreneurs in the DRC face several challenges, including a difficult business climate and obstacles to starting a business. They confront issues such as multiple taxes, a weak entrepreneurial spirit, and significant financial difficulties due to limited capital. Additionally, there is minimal government support, further exacerbated by the complexity of the tax system. Insecurity, stemming from ongoing conflicts and wars, also undermines an environment conducive for business growth (Enguta, 2020; PASEC, 2021).

2.7 Contribution of NPOs in Amplifying the Voices, Views, and Perspectives of Youth

The Congolese government is increasingly recognising NGOs' vital role in the development process, especially in addressing the high poverty levels. As a result, the government is actively forming partnerships with these organisations to tackle various developmental challenges (ANINGINA, 1999). It is not coincidental that numerous NGOs are emerging throughout the country. In many villages, individuals from different tribes or regions create one or more NGOs or development initiatives to improve local populations' living conditions. Additionally, NGOs complement the efforts of international organisations, such as United Nations agencies, in their development work.

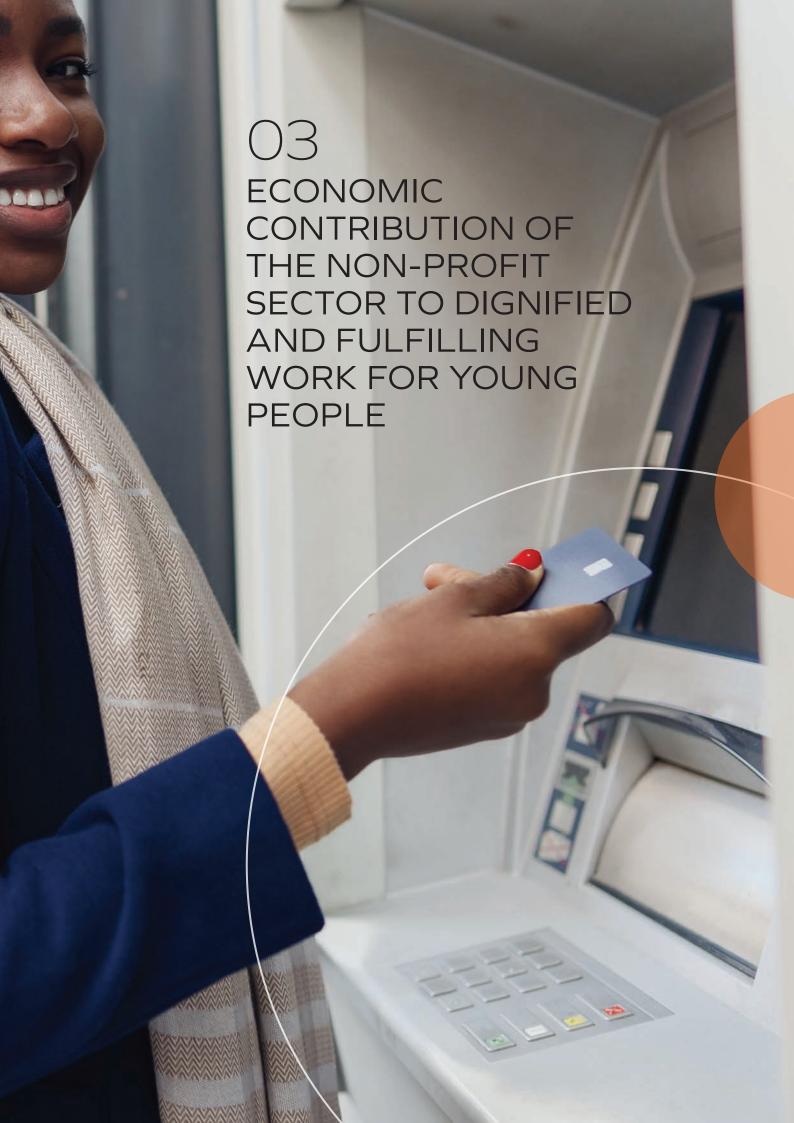
In addition to NGOs, various 'traditional' associations have emerged to address multiple developmental challenges in communities or those faced by their members. According to the Ministry of Planning, the associative subsector also plays the roles of spokesperson and pressure group. It helps the population escape inertia, submission, and fatalism in the face of abuses, errors, and excesses of power. It encourages a mentality of non-violent resistance against these abuses (UNDP, 2000).

Many young people are actively engaging in initiatives to promote peace and social cohesion. For instance, the National League and Support for Youth Initiatives in the Democratic Republic of Congo was established to encourage youth to become advocates for peace and defenders of human rights. This initiative is a response to the country's ongoing conflicts⁸. Additionally, it promotes entrepreneurship and economic empowerment among young people.

According to Van Gyampo and Anyidoho, the youth in the DRC are active political participants; they join political parties and engage in activism (Diouf, 2018). Their involvement in politics reflects their desire to participate in decision-making processes. Diouf emphasises that young people in the DRC play a pivotal role in social and political movements, serving as both agents of change and victims of societal crises. This interaction between economic and political engagement underscores the crucial role of youth in shaping associative structures in Africa, serving as a driving force for development and national identity (Uzoigwe, 2016) .



⁸ https://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-acteurs-501_fr.html



dignified job has the following characteristics: the free will to work, a salary that allows one to live with dignity (feed one's family and educate one's children), respect for fundamental rights, social protection, social dialogue, and social equality between men and women. A fulfilling job, on the other hand, offers a variety of employment opportunities to the youth. It has five characteristics: an attractive salary, a balance between professional and private life, favourable working conditions, and job security (Deranty & Millan, 2013; Ghai, 2003).

Accordingly, it is important to address the extent the non-profit sector contribute to creating dignified and fulfilling jobs in the DRC. This review has demonstrated that the non-profit sector generates formal employment by hiring young workers to carry out its programs and projects. Despite facing substantial financial challenges, such as limited access to international funding and a reliance on local contributions, NGOs play a crucial role in community development and job creation (Nyange, 2010). In addition, the review reveals that NPOs' contribution to creating dignified and fulfilling jobs is more indirect through various channels, including skills development, training, mentorship, coaching, and volunteerism (Ekiyor, 2008). These initiatives, particularly the role of NPOs in providing young people with their first exposure to the professional world, are crucial; helping to develop practical skills that enhance their employability. Furthermore, some NPOs provide seed capital to young entrepreneurs.

Young people's perceptions of jobs in NGOs are somewhat mixed, particularly regarding whether these positions are dignified and fulfilling. One main criticism is the instability of employment. According to Bokolo (2021), young people working in a faith-based NGO were often employed on short-term contracts that rely on the availability of funding from international donors. NGOs in the country frequently struggle with sustainable financing. As a result, some young workers may find themselves without formal employment contracts, leaving them vulnerable to fluctuations in funding. This uncertainty surrounding the renewal of contracts, which may leave them unsure if their job will continue, contributes to job dissatisfaction and makes the work less fulfilling. The second criticism concerns the low wages paid to employees by NPOs. Young people working for these organisations receive low wages or volunteer without pay (Bashwira, 2020). The risk of losing their jobs often shatters their concerns about demanding salary improvement. The absence of formal contacts and high levels of unemployment leave staff of NPOs vulnerable and at the discretion of their employers. In this context, even when managers of NPOs are violating their rights, they do not seek redress in courts for fear of losing their jobs.

These two factors and the scarcity of formal jobs contribute to the proliferation of informal activities. Indeed, the 1-2-3 Survey showed that almost all (over 94 per cent) of young people aged 15 to 29 years who have a primary education worked in the informal sector; the proportion is 88.6 per cent for all young people of this age. The proportions are lowest among young people with a higher university level: 53 per cent, as shown in Figure 2.

95,8 93,9 97,6 97,2 86,3 75,4 88,6 79,3 NOINSTRUCTION PRIMARY SECONDARY TERTIARY TOTAL

FIGURE 2: Share of employment in the informal sector by level of education

Source: E-QUIBB (2016)

The UNDP considers the informal sector as a "real refuge for those who are rejected, marginalised or 'refused' by the formal employment sector: school leavers who cannot find paid employment, deflated workers in the formal private sector who are looking for a source of income; underpaid and irregularly paid workers in public administrations and even companies who are looking to top up their monthly pay; women who have to supplement their spouses' meagre wages; etc." (UNDP, nd: 190). In addition to serving as a refuge, many young people who struggle to find decent and fulfilling jobs in the formal sector often take on two jobs simultaneously in the informal sector. As a result, several workers are either self-employed or work for small businesses. In 2016, 7.4 percent of those in the informal sector held more than two jobs. Notably, a higher percentage of men were in this situation than women, with 4.2 percent of women working multiple jobs. This indicates that 11 out of every 100 workers in the informal sector had more than one job simultaneously (INS, 2021).

A third limitation is that marginalised youth are individuals who experience systemic exclusion due to factors such as socio-economic disadvantage, political instability, and discrimination based on gender, race, or caste. These factors significantly limit their access to opportunities and resources necessary for a decent standard of living. NPOs might provide jobs that offer immediate benefit and involve these youth in initiatives, like building schools and orphanages, concerns may arise regarding child labour and exploitation, especially if these jobs are not officially recognised as legitimate work (Johnson, 2019). Additionally, if such initiatives do not lead to sustainable and decent employment opportunities, they may inadvertently perpetuate cycles of marginalisation.





he segmentation of civil society and its activities plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the labour market and employment opportunities for marginalised youth. The Ministry of Planning has categorised NPOs into several groups: NGOs, community associations, religious organisations, and other non-profit entities. Although the number of NPOs is increasing, there is limited knowledge about their impact on youth employment.

4.1 NGOs and Associations According to Spheres of Activity

The two spheres of activity include national and international associations, which are discussed in the subsections that follow.

4.1.1 NGOs and national associations

These organisations and associations are established by individuals or group of individuals to offer services to local communities. A clear distinction exists between NGOs, national support associations, and those that engage in direct, grassroots intervention (Ekiyor, 2008)

NGOs and support associations play a vital role in encouraging and supporting the efforts of direct intervention partners, local development initiatives, and grassroots groups. They provide funding, subsidies, donations, legacies, as well as material and logistical assistance. Examples of such organisations in the DRC include the group of Market Gardening Mothers, the Kimbanguiste Social Development Department affiliated with certain religious denominations, the savings and credit cooperatives of the Evangelist Network of Alliances, and the Peasant Solidarity of Kivu, among others (Aningina, 1999).

These entities operate on the ground, strategically specialising in one or more areas. Despite their limited financial resources, they employ a strategic approach, turning to NGOs or International Financing Associations to obtain subsidies for their activities. They also approach the governments of industrialised countries through cooperation agencies. This strategic planning is a key factor in their success (Sangol, 2020). They coordinate their activities through intervention or grassroots NGOs. Examples of such organisations in the DRC are *Fédération des ONG laïques à vocation* économique *du Congo* (Federation of Secular NGOs for Economic Purpose in Congo) and *Conseil National des ONG de développement* (National Council of Development NGOs).

NGOs or grassroots associations implement their programs directly at the community level. These organisations provide support and carry out direct interventions to assist local populations. Examples of such organisations in the DRC include the Man Foundation and the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These organisations hire young people to work on programs and projects like construction sites.

4.1.2 NGOs and international associations

International NGOs and associations have broadened their scope of activities, extending beyond their countries of origin to operate in various other nations. Notable examples of these international NPOs include Oxfam, *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders), the International Red Cross, the Damien Foundation, and Memisa International. Some international NPOs receive funding from their governments or parent organisations to implement programs in developing countries like the DRC. They redistribute these funds to intervention NGOs to finance projects on the ground. It is important to note that some faith-based NGOs and associations financially support local organisations affiliated with their religious groups (Mpembele, 2003).

International NPOs also provide funding to national NPOs to implement projects. In addition, they directly implement programs and initiatives in their host countries and help create jobs by hiring local staff. However, like all NPOs, no statistics indicate the number of jobs they create in the DRC (Kahasha ka Nashi, 2012).

4.2 NGOs and Associations According To Their Areas of Intervention

Classifying NGOs and associations by their areas of intervention helps to differentiate their roles clearly. The effectiveness of NGOs in promoting youth employment relies on these specific focuses. Therefore, the contribution of NGOs to creating job opportunities for young people depends on their particular areas of intervention.

4.2.1 Humanitarian NGOs

The main objective of a humanitarian NGO or association is to respond to the emergency needs of populations in crisis situations (conflicts, natural disasters). This is particularly the case for *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the Red Cross, Caritas, etc. These organisations recruit only a few experts to implement their programs.

Locally, a number of NPOs are involved in humanitarian sector and other related aspects. Two of them are:

- Association congolaise pour l'accès à la justice (Congolese Association for Access to Justice): This NPO fights
 for the promotion of justice and human rights in DRC. It provides free legal assistance to disadvantaged people
 and lobbies for reform of judicial system⁹;
- Bureau d'Etudes, de recherche et de conseil pour le développement (Office of studies research and advice for development): This NPO researches and promotes sustainable development in DRC. It conducts studies on social, economic, and environmental issues, and provides advice to policy makers and civil society organisations¹⁰.

4.2.2 NGOs in the education sector

The main objectives of these organisations are to promote education, literacy, and access to information. Various religious denominations, including the Catholic, Protestant, and Kimbanguist churches, as well as organisations like Save the Children, Plan International, and Enfants de Cœur, are actively involved in these efforts. Their activities often include the construction or rehabilitation of schools, which requires a significant workforce.

Locally, a number of NPOs are involved in the education sector and other related aspects. Some of them are:

- Enseignement pour tous (Education for all): This NPO is dedicated to improving access to education for all children in DRC. It builds and manages primary and secondary schools, and provides school supplies and scholarships to disadvantaged pupils⁹.
- Coopération, éducation et culture (Cooperation, education and culture): This NPO has been working for a long time to improve education in Kinshasa. Part of its mission is to train teachers but it also has programs that directly support pupils and schools. The NPO is also a library specialising in African and Caribbean literature (housed in the Espace Césaire), educational events, exhibitions, and cultural activities¹⁰.

4.2.3 NGOs in the health sector

The main objective of these NGOs is to improve public health by combating diseases and providing healthcare services. NGOs such as *Médecins du Monde, Action Contre la Faim,* Pathfinder, *Bondeko ya Sika*, and *Millénium Médical 2000* actively campaign for health improvements and cater to their target groups. Additionally, similar to their counterparts in the education sector, NGOs in the health sector also engage in constructing and rehabilitating healthcare infrastructure with the aim of providing access to quality healthcare to their target groups.

NGOs in the health sector also engage in constructing and rehabilitating healthcare infrastructure.

Locally, a number of NPOs are involved in the health sector and other related aspects. These include:

- Etoile du sud (Southern Star): This NGO, under Congolese law, campaigns for the right to health at the grassroots level, enabling them to take charge of their own health. It supports local initiatives to raise awareness among the grassroots and works in the outlying areas of the major towns in DRC, with local organisations and non-profit associations, as well as grassroots structures, to campaign together for the right to health.¹¹
- Action pour la Promotion de la Santé de la Mère et de l'Enfant (Action for the Promotion of Mother and Child Health: This is a non-governmental organisation established under Congolese law in 2013. It is active in the fields of health and humanitarian emergencies in six provinces of the DRC. These six provinces are North Kivu, South Kivu, Kasaï Oriental, Haut Lomami, Kinshasa and Tanganyika¹².

^{9 &}lt;u>https://acajrdc.org/presentation-de-lacaj/</u>

^{10 &}lt;u>https://becrd.com/</u>

¹¹ https://etoiledusud.cd

¹² https://apsmerdc.org

4.2.4 Developmental NGOs

The objective of developmental NGOs is to promote sustainable socio-economic development, which includes improving agriculture, enhancing community living conditions, combating gender inequality, and strengthening resilience. Some of the NGOs involved in these efforts are Oxfam, CARE, MUTOTA and *Kongo Esala*¹³. These organisations often undertake significant projects, such as constructing bridges and roads, and improving education, health and agriculture, which may necessitate a large workforce recruited using the HIMO approach. *Kongo esala*, for example, is dedicated to development in DRC, focusing on education, health, agriculture, leadership, and innovative advances.

4.2.5 Environmental NGOs

Their main objectives are to protect the environment and biodiversity and promote sustainable practices. These NGOs and Associations work, in most cases, in the DRC's biodiversity reserves and parks. Examples include the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, and the Ecological and Biodiversity Initiative in the DRC.

Several Organisations are active in this sector:

- Actions pour les Droits, l'Environnement et la Vie (Actions for Rights, Environment and Life: This is a nonprofit association and environmental and human rights NGO set up in January 2000. It is based in the town of Boma and operates throughout the province of Kongo central in DRC. Its mission is to promote sustainable development based on environmental protection and respect for human rights.¹⁴
- Mouvement de Jeunes pour la protection de l'Environnement (Youth Movement for Environnemental Protection): The NGO works to combat climate change and biodiversity loss through raising awareness, training, and capacity-building for young people and local communities at grassroots level. It campaigns against the expansion of fossil fuels and works to promote 100 per cent renewable energies that are accessible to all, generate income, and engender respect the environment¹⁵.

4.2.6 NGOs and human rights associations

There are many NPOs in the DRC working to defend human rights. Some are local, others international. These organisations play a crucial role in documenting human rights violations, raising public awareness, and holding those responsible to account. These NGOs and associations focus on defending and promoting human rights while combating abuses and violations of those rights. In many cases, they are affiliated with the Ministry of Justice. Examples of both national and international human rights organisations include *La Voix des Sans Voix*, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

Some examples of human rights organisations in DRC are:

- Lucha (Fight for Change): This is a civil society movement that campaigns for good governance and organises peaceful demonstrations¹⁶.
- Association africaine de défense des droits de l'homme (The African Association for the Defense of Human Rights): This NGO aims to prevent and combat corruption and defend human rights¹⁷.
- Agir ensemble pour les droits humains (Work together for human rights): This, NGO supports civil society actors working for the defence and promotion of human rights¹⁸.
- Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme (Congolese Human Rights Observatory): This NGO promotes, defends, and protects human rights in DRC, working on a number of issues to improve the situation of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy¹⁹.

¹³ https://kongoesala.org

¹⁴ https://www.forestpeoples.org/fr/node/50020

¹⁵ https://mjperdc.org/index.php

^{16 &}lt;u>www.luchacongo.org</u>

¹⁷ https://www.privatesecurityobservatory.org/about/members/asadho.html

¹⁸ https://agir-ensemble-droits-humains-org/fr/home/

¹⁹ https://www.omct.org/fr/membres-du-reseau/observatoire-congolais-des-droits-de-lhomme-ocdh

4.2.7 NGOs and associations promoting rights of women and vulnerable people

These organisations are dedicated to defending women's rights, promoting gender equality, and empowering women both economically and socially. They participate in organising awareness campaigns and support programs. Notable organisations in this field include the Mwimba Texas Foundation, Women for Women International, UN Women, the Association of Women Lawyers of DRC, all of which promote, protect, and defend human rights in general and the rights of women and children in particular. National Network of NGOs for Women's Development²⁰ is a collective of over 350 NGOs members working to promote the rights of women, children, and communities in all areas of social life, and providing support to the most vulnerable people in areas affected by chronic humanitarian crises. It also improves access to healthcare, particularly for people with disabilities and displaced persons.²¹

4.2.8 NGOs and youth associations

Many NGOs work on numerous aspects of youth, such as education, civil rights, personal development, reproductive and sexual health, among others. Two such organisations are:

- Collectif des Organisations des Jeunes Solidaires (The Collective of Youth Organisations in Solidarity): This
 is a large organisation present throughout the country. It focuses on education for citizenship, peace, and
 sustainable development.²²
- Association congolaise pour le bien-être familial (Congolese Association for Family Welfare): This is a national
 organisation dedicated to promoting sexual and reproductive health, particularly among young people.²³

4.3 Overview

The NGOs and associations discussed in this review are not exhaustive; however, they reflect the diversity of organisations in DRC and highlight the complex challenges facing the country and its government. The review indicates that the Congolese state is unable to meet all the needs and demands of its population in various sectors, including education, employment, health care, and development. A key characteristic of these organisations is their wide-ranging presence across almost all sectors of society. Nevertheless, their capacity to intervene is relatively weak, partly due to their reliance on foreign donors. Additionally, they are further hindered by the political environment in which they operate.

This review indicates that NGOs play a role in job creation. However, the lack of available data makes it challenging to quantify the actual number of jobs generated by NPOs. Furthermore, the Congolese economy is largely dominated by the informal sector, which means that NPOs have a minimal impact on creating formal, dignified, and fulfilling jobs for youth. As noted by Mpembele (2003), the direct contribution of NGOs to youth employment remains unclear due to insufficient data regarding NPOs' roles in providing dignified and meaningful work. In this context, evaluating their contribution to job creation for marginalised youth, especially those living with disabilities, becomes even more difficult. Consequently, it is challenging to assess how NPOs contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 10, which urges countries to promote policies and legislation to increase the income of the poorest 40 per cent and reduce wage inequalities based on gender, age, disability, social or ethnic origin, and religious affiliation (as cited by Mpembele, 2003).

The segmented nature of DRC's labour market requires tailored policy responses to address the diverse needs of young job seekers, particularly those have been unemployed long-term. Therefore, while NPOs can facilitate integration, they will not address systemic inequalities. According to Onwujuba (2002), this calls for comprehensive strategies to support marginalised youth in the labour market.

²⁰ https://renadef-congo.org

²¹ https://www.hi.org/fr/pays/republique-democratique-du-congo

²² http://kakaluigi.unblog.fr/2007/12/31/declaration-kojeski/

²³ https://africa.ippf.org/fr/about-us/member-associations/association-congolaise-pour-le-bien-etre-familial



his review has highlighted that many aspects related to NPOs' contribution to job creation for youth, especially young women in the DRC, are poorly documented and represent emerging knowledge gaps, which are discussed below.

The poor quality of training received by job applicants makes potential employers hesitant to recruit young people looking for jobs. The causes of the poor quality of training are known: the obsolescence of training programs, the dilapidated state of school infrastructure, the demotivation and profile of teachers, the profile of learners and pupils, learning conditions, and underfunding of the education system. A lack of professional preparation is evident as the majority of young people enter the labour market without preparation and without in-depth knowledge of the work environment due to a lack of adequate training, necessary experience, networks, resources, and information on available positions. This lack of preparation prevents young people from competing for jobs and adapting to the demands of the labour market.

Graduates unemployability and lack of entrepreneurial skills is high in DRC. The education sector trains more job seekers than job creators. It fills the minds of students with inert or dead knowledge. The higher education institutions in the country do not equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, a mismatch between graduate supply and the needs of the labour market exists. However, scholars have not paid much attention to this area for systematic research. Thus, beyond the production and transmission of knowledge and skills, the university must ensure the employability of its graduates.

The absence of a genuine national employment policy means that at the end of the training, graduates are left to their own devices and do not benefit from adequate support that could enable them to access jobs, that correspond to their skills, offered by companies. Existing policies and programs aimed at improving youth employment are often insufficient or poorly implemented, failing to meet the needs of young job seekers. This is partly because the policies in the country are not evidence-based. This area requires future research and partnerships between the government, the private sector, and academia.

There is an assumption that higher education qualifications will correlate with employment, including dignified and fulfilling jobs, and consequently higher remuneration. However, the literature review has shown that while this is the case for a limited number of graduates, there are high levels of unemployment and underemployment among graduates in DRC. Most graduates are in temporary jobs in the informal sector, where their knowledge and skills are underutilised. University graduates interviewed as part of a study cited the following explanatory factors for their unemployment:

- the lack of available jobs;
- the lack of money or means to start their own businesses;
- the lack of initiative;
- the fact that jobs are granted according to family relations or community and political influences; and
- the lack of professional experience required by the job markets.

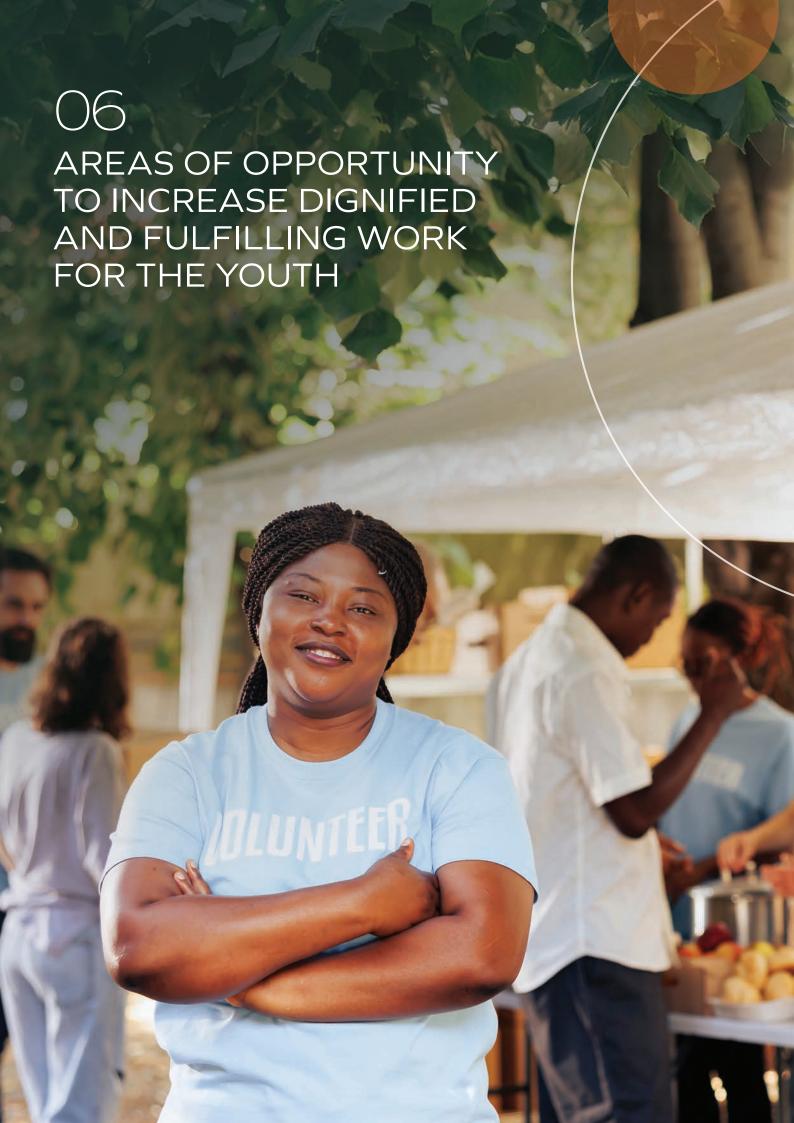
It is therefore important that, in the employment search, in addition to the demand for employment by potential employers, social capital (social networks and interpersonal relationships) and cultural capital (own resources inherited from families) be considered. While these gaps are revealed in the literature, the major impediment to NPOs contributing to job creation for the youth is the structural nature of the economy, with a small formal sector and most jobs being in the informal sector. Ensuring structural transformation, among others, will ensure a transition from informal to formal employment.

As noted in this review, the number of jobs in the non-profit sector also depends on the possibility of increasing funding for the sector. However, this funding is very volatile and sometimes closely linked to the political and economic context of the country. The rife insecurity in the country and the business climate constitute major challenges to securing external funding. Resolving the insecurity crisis will create an environment conducive for NPOs to thrive and increase the number of donors supporting NPOs in the country. In light of this, the intersection of insecurity and NPOs is a gap that requires future research. The literature is silent on the mining sector's role in supporting NPOs. This is another gap for future research.

Another gap revealed by the literature review is that the salaries of NPO staff are not enough to meet their needs. This is attributable to inadequate funding. NPOs in the DRC largely depend on donor funding, which is inadequate for their operations and staff salaries. Diversifying their fund base to ensure the sustainability of NPOs is a gap that requires attention.

Listed above are some of the knowledge gaps that the review revealed about the non-profit sector's contribution to the creation of decent and fulfilling jobs for the youth.





he non-profit sector and social enterprises have significant opportunities to enhance their role in creating dignified and fulfilling jobs. Government tax exemptions provide these organisations with greater financial resources to develop new initiatives and contribute to job creation. Additionally, the rise in education levels among the Congolese population has equipped the country with essential skills necessary for development. NPOs can recruit skilled personnel to implement their programs and projects effectively. Furthermore, the adoption of the National Youth Policy and the Revised National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence offers a legal framework for implementing initiatives that will have a positive impact on young people and women in the DRC.

6.1 Gaps to Overcome

The non-profit sector faces significant gaps in its contribution to dignified and fulfilling jobs for young people. These include:

- *Precarious jobs*: Jobs available in the non-profit sector are often precarious, with short-term contracts and little job security.
- *Underemployment*: Many young people are underemployed, working in jobs that do not match their qualifications or career aspirations.
- Volunteering: Many young people engage in volunteer activities to gain experience, develop skills, and expand their professional network. Volunteering is often seen as a way to enter the non-profit sector.
- Community initiatives: Young people actively participate in local and community initiatives, particularly development, those related to awareness-raising, sustainable development, and rights protection.
- Advocacy and activism: Many young people are involved in advocacy movements addressing human rights, education, health, and the environment. They use social media to mobilise and raise awareness.
- Entrepreneurial projects: Some young people create their own projects or start-ups in the non-profit sector, particularly in education, health, and sustainable agriculture.

6.2 Challenges to Address

Internal and external factors hampered NPOs' ability to contribute to DRC's economic development and creating dignified and fulfilling jobs for the youth and women. The next sub-sections discuss these issues.

6.2.1 Internal challenges

- NGO Management: Corruption, insufficient funding, weak collaboration with the government, and a lack of
 qualified personnel significantly hamper the proper functioning of NGOs (Kang'ethe & Manomano, 2014;
 Montclos, 2015). Project management, leadership, and advocacy skills are often insufficient, limiting team
 capacity development and associations at the local or area level (Kaba, 2021).
- Lack of Sustainable financing: NGOs in the country struggle to diversify their funding sources and develop sustainable business models. Most depend on donor funding, and knowledge of innovative financing mechanisms is often insufficient. According to Batti (2014), this is why NPOs are embarking on multiple activities to diversify their sources of income.
- Monitoring and evaluation capacity: Many NPOs in DRC lack the skills to set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems, which limits their ability to measure the impact of their interventions.
- Low adaption and use of new technologies: The adoption of new technologies by NPOs for data collection, communication, and project management is often low, hampering innovation and making work archaic and tedious.

6.2.2 External challenges

In addition to the internal problems facing NPOs, Mpembele (2003) identified some external factors that adversely affect their mandate achievement, including economic contributions and creating dignified and fulfilling jobs for the youth.

- Weak state presence: State action is not perceptible on the ground, making NGOs a crucial alternative to reaching local communities. This lack of state support undermines the effectiveness of NGO initiatives, as they often have to fill gaps left by the government.
- Chaotic environment: The security situation in some areas of DRC is unstable, particularly in many provinces affected by wars and tribal conflicts. This situation can complicate the implementation of programs and projects, making it difficult for NGOs to achieve their objectives effectively (Mlambo, 2021).
- Limited results of consultative mechanisms: The social partners, including NPOs, are often isolated; therefore, there is limited social dialogue to exchange information and collaborate to resolve development problems facing the stakeholders and the country. This limits innovation and the diffusion of good practices. NPOs can become champions of social dialogue to promote job creation for youth, including dignified and fulfilling jobs. To this end, strengthening research, documentation, and experience-sharing capacities becomes crucial in social dialogue (Mpembele, 2003; UNDP, 2000).
- External and security factors: Internal and external factors have contributed to the deterioration of the economic and security situation in the DRC since independence. These have contributed to the high levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment, and underemployment, especially among the youth and women. NPOs can be a major social partner in addressing these challenges (Ahere & Muraya, 2014).
- Strengthening local capacities: NPOs in the DRC lack the capacity to intervene and address the problems of high
 youth unemployment and a lack of dignified and fulfilling jobs. The UNDP (2000) recommends empowering
 local actors in the DRC, particularly NGOs, to develop their capacity to play a key role in addressing the youth
 unemployment crisis. Though NPOs have limited resources to overcome this gap, they should prioritise it in
 their programming.

To overcome the above, reliable and up-to-date data is required to enable NPOs to target their interventions effectively. Without rigorous evaluation, measuring the programs' results and identifying best practices is difficult.

It is also important for NPOs to understand the specific needs of vulnerable communities, which was not the case at the time of this review. Consequently, NPOs' interventions are poorly targeted and ineffective. As the UNDP (2000) noted, the limited capacity of NPOs to train NGO members and adapt to contextual developments further complicates the situation.



6.3 Possibilities and Opportunities

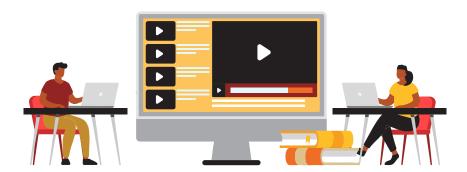
The non-profit sector has numerous possibilities and opportunities to increase employment of youth. Technology interventions are anticipated to play a vital role in the non-profit sector's efforts to create dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities for youth in the DRC. Online learning platforms and digital training programs will enhance access to education and skills development, particularly for marginalised groups that may not benefit from traditional opportunities.

Moreover, the use of online marketing among young people, particularly girls, has grown significantly. NPOs can invest in training these young individuals to utilise new technologies effectively. Digital marketing will provide young people with access to a broader market, extending beyond their local communities and countries. Ultimately, this growth will enhance their businesses and allow them to create more job opportunities.

Despite advancements, several challenges persist that hinder NPOs from effectively utilising technologies. In DRC, internet availability is significantly low in terms of coverage and access. Additionally, the quality of electricity supply is often subpar. Frequent power outages are commonly reported as a barrier that prevents NPOs from operating efficiently; ultimately limiting their ability to create job opportunities for young people.

Additionally, initiatives that promote a green economy, such as renewable energy and waste recycling, are crucial for job creation in the DRC (Neverauskiene & Rakauskiene, 2018). The country is home to vast forest reserves, making it a potential 'pay solution' to address the global threats posed by climate change. The green economy is undoubtedly a sector where significant NPOs can engage and make an impact.

Investments in the water sector present a crucial opportunity for NPOs to contribute to job creation. However, the challenge lies in the fact that the water sector demands significant capital investment, which often exceeds the financial capabilities of NPOs. Moreover, relying solely on building boreholes as a source of water supply is not a sustainable long-term solution.





he high population growth in DRC results in more young people seeking jobs. However, the country's poor economic situation, characterised by low industrialisation and a limited ability to create employment opportunities, has led to high youth unemployment rates.

The literature review indicates that the DRC faces significant challenges that affect youth employability. These challenges include the scarcity of decent and well-paying jobs, inadequate training, weak networking systems, tribalism, corruption, and insecurity. These factors particularly affect young individuals who hold university or professional qualifications.

The non-profit sector is increasingly being called upon to address the shortcomings of both the public and private sectors. Existing literature indicates that this sector has significant potential for creating job opportunities for youth. However, there is a notable lack of data and studies focused specifically on this topic. This gap in research underscores why this review leans more toward documentary research rather than a traditional literature review. Most existing data and studies have concentrated on formal employment generated by public and private sectors, as well as informal work and self-employment. Consequently, this literature review could not thoroughly address this topic.

The literature review indicates that this sector involves various stakeholders engaged in health, education, agriculture, and community development activities. NPOs directly create jobs for young people by hiring workers to implement their programs and projects. Additionally, they indirectly support youth employability through training, mentoring, fostering entrepreneurial spirit and initiative, and offering volunteering opportunities. This approach creates job opportunities for young people and enhances their adaptability and innovation skills. It is important to assess this indirect contribution to understand its impact and the mechanisms involved.

NPOs face various challenges, such as insufficient funding, weak organisational structures, ineffective leadership, and corruption. Addressing these issues is essential to improving their capacity to contribute to job creation, particularly dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities for youth, including young girls.



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