

International Child Safeguarding Week: Children in the DRC at the heart of global concerns

On International Child Safeguarding Week, we want to draw the attention of the international humanitarian community to an often-forgotten reality: that of children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In this country marked by recurring conflicts, poverty and prolonged humanitarian crises, children's fundamental rights to protection are still too often violated.

Childhood in danger

In the DRC, children face immense challenges:

- Limited access to education: thousands of children do not attend school due to poverty, forced displacement linked to conflict, or a lack of suitable infrastructure.
- Serious violations of children's rights: the recruitment of children into armed groups, sexual violence, economic exploitation and child labour continue to be reported in several provinces.
- Inadequate access to basic services: nearly half of schools lack water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, exposing pupils to disease and increasing absenteeism, especially among girls.
- Insecurity and displacement: armed violence is causing mass displacement. Millions of children now live in camps or with host families, in extremely precarious conditions. These realities demonstrate a profound gap between the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the daily lives of many children in the DRC.

Structural and persistent challenges

Despite the efforts of humanitarian actors and the government, several obstacles hinder the effective protection of children:

- Chronic underfunding of programmes dedicated to children's education, protection and health.
- Insufficient consideration of child protection in public policy, often overshadowed by security and economic emergencies.

- Lack of accessible and functional protection mechanisms in communities and schools.
- Low accountability for perpetrators of child rights violations, reinforcing a culture of impunity.

A call for international mobilisation

Let's make International Child Safeguarding Week more than a symbolic moment: it must become a lever for global advocacy. Children in the DRC need a stronger commitment from the international community to:

- Invest heavily in children's education, health and protection, including in conflict-affected areas.
- Strengthen community and school safeguarding mechanisms, with a focus on preventing violence and abuse.
- Support the reintegration of child survivors of sexual violence and children associated with armed groups, to give them a real chance at holistic recovery.
- Ensure that perpetrators of grave violations against children are held accountable in order to break the cycle of impunity.

Together, protect today to build tomorrow

The children of the DRC are not asking for charity, they are asking for justice and dignity. Every child deserves to grow up protected, cared for and valued.

On the occasion of this International Week, we are launching a strong appeal: let's make child protection a top priority on the international agenda, because protecting children today means guaranteeing peace, stability and sustainable development tomorrow.

Child protection above all else.