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**IMPROVING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN
WOMEN IN INFORMAL SECTOR - PRODUCTION & MANAGEMENT**

The Case of Congo

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I. INTRODUCTION

1 Project RAF/87/042/UNDP/ECA was designed to draw more attention to particular problems that women encounter in the performance of their economic activities in the informal sector. It was noted that in spite of measures taken to assist women during the women's decade, they still remain on the periphery of the development process. Though in the developed countries they have emerged and are participating better in the national economic development, in the developing countries, the integration of women in the development process has just recently become food for thought. Indeed, all countries are so beset by serious economic development problems that even those which so far seemed unaffected due to their national resources (agricultural or mineral), have been hard hit by the adverse effects of the world economic crisis and are, as a result, compelled to mobilize all their resources including and, above all, human resources so as to ensure the recovery of their economy.

2 Such is the situation of the People's Republic of the Congo which was compelled, due to the slump in its oil earnings and its indebtedness resulting from the vast public investment programmes undertaken during the 1973/74 oil boom, to adopt since 1985 the structural adjustment programme, SAP¹. Measures resulting from SAP implementation, had obvious effects on the life style of the population. These measures were of two categories:

- ▶ reduction of non-productive investments
- ▶ freezing of recruitments in the public sector, etc

3 These measures to the Congolese, especially the young people, presuppose that they accept to move to employment sectors other than those of the modern sector. Only the informal unstructural sector can still provide such an opportunity. In Congo as elsewhere, the informal sector covers micro-activities which span from the distribution of goods and services to small-scale retail trade. In African economies, it creates jobs and generates revenue for the nation².

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

4 In Congo, the few studies devoted to the informal sector such as those undertaken by international organizations on this issue, dealt, solely, with activities carried out by men in this sector.

¹ SAP- Structural Adjustment Programme

² Report on Employment in Africa, 1988, ILO/Programme on Employment and Technical Skills in Africa (PECTA)

5 This project seeks to propose policies likely to strengthen the role of women in the area of production and management in the informal sector of Congo through an evaluation of

- ▶ explicit and implicit policies in favour of the informal sector in general and of women in particular,
- ▶ restrictive and enabling laws in favour of women of the private sector,
- ▶ the involvement of women in programmes under implementation in the said sector,
- ▶ the participation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, their capability to devise policies in favour of women of the informal sector and follow up their implementation

III. METHODOLOGY

6 The study on women's activities in the informal sector in Congo was based on

a) Documents

- ▶ In Addis Ababa, documents were got from the technical divisions of the Economic Commission for Africa (Agriculture, Statistics, Industry and International Trade), from the International Labour Office (IASPA, PECTA) from the United Nations Children Fund. The objective was to gather all available data on women and the informal sector,
- ▶ In Congo, thanks to co-operation from the Ministry of Planning and UNFPA, consultation meetings were organized with technical services involved in the project at the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft, the Ministry of Agriculture and Youths, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Higher Education, Department of Social Affairs as well as international organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR, UNFPA and the World Bank. The various meetings gave a clear idea of the policies and actions taken by the above-mentioned ministries and institutions in favour of women in general, and of the place that women occupy in particular.

b) Field work

- ▶ in the area of Brazzaville and in the rural area of Owando, headquarters of the "Region de Cuvette", and in Oyo contact with actors/women who have formed individual enterprises in agriculture, handicraft and small-scale trade, made it possible to
 - ascertain the number of women in the informal sector,
 - clarify activities carried out by women of the informal sector,
 - determine their income levels,

- determine their level of education,
- identify problems confronting them

IV. EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

1 Physical and socio-demographic data

7 The People's Republic of the Congo is situated in the Central African region and has an area of 342,000 km². It is bordered to the North by Cameroon and the Central African Republic to the East by the rivers Congo and Ubangi, to the South by Zaire and Angola, to the South West by the Atlantic Ocean and to the West by Gabon.

8 In 1984, its population was 1,909,248 inhabitants of whom 992,097 live in the urban area along the major highways of the South and 917,151 in the rural area³.

9 The working population, estimated at 625,297 inhabitants that is, 34.7% of the total population was distributed as follows:

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING POPULATION ACCORDING TO SEX AND POSITION

Sex Position	Male	Female	TOTAL
Actively occupied	395,177	255,053	550,225
Unemployed who have once worked	11,155	1,054	12,709
Unemployed who have never worked	40,925	21,438	62,363
TOTAL	347,252	278,045	625,297

Source: SNSEE, National Centre for Economic Statistics and Studies - 1984 Census

2 Economic data

10 The People's Republic of the Congo has enormous economic potential either in the forestry sector where the forest covers almost 55% of its area and was, for long, its first economic resource before the 1973/74 oil boom, or in agriculture practiced over its vast arable land, or in water area with its powerful rivers such as the Ubangi and its tributaries and the Congo, or in the mining sector with the exploitation of lead and oil.

³ See Annex 3 1984 population distribution according to sex and age group

11 According to statistics from the National Centre for Economic and Statistics and Studies the

breakdown of the national crude sold on the market in 1984⁴ was as follows

▶ Agriculture and forestry	6 9%
▶ Oil	43 0%
▶ Manufacture and mines (except oil)	4 9%
▶ Trade and transport and 23% commercial enterprises	
▶ Other sectors	<u>22 2%</u>
TOTAL	<u>100.0%</u>

3 Employment in the People's Republic of the Congo

12 As previously stated, the uneven population distribution explains the imbalance existing between the urban and rural areas. In no time, the strong urban population pressure (almost 52%)⁵ made the number of available jobs in both the public and private sectors inadequate when compared to the working population total demand.

13 In 1984, out of a working population of 625,297 people, the modern public and private sectors employed only 146,790 of whom 51,290 were in the civil service. It emerges that about 478,507 were engaged in agriculture, cottage industry and trade.

14 For long, the Congolese government felt that it had avoided the chronic unemployment prevailing in most other African countries. This was due to several positive elements such as low population, favourable economic conditions, the political option which guaranteed jobs to young graduates, and the system of education whose flexibility made it possible to postpone the access of young people to the jobs market⁶.

15 Changes that took place in the country's economy since 1984, especially the drop in oil proceeds, the almost single source of revenues, and the adoption of the structural adjustment programme which followed soon made the Congolese government unable to meet the increasing job demands.

⁴ See Annex 5 - Gross Domestic Product according to economic activity at current prices.

⁵ See Annex 4 - Population distribution according to councils and administrative regions.

⁶ Pupils could repeat the same class several times up to the age of 25 without being dismissed. Their access to the job market was thus delayed.

16 The adoption of the structural adjustment programme led the government to implement a series of austerity measures amongst which are the following

- ▶ a drastic cut in public spending,
- ▶ the closing-down of a good number of state corporations,
- ▶ the freezing of recruitments

17 This message was very clear to the population the State was beset by an economic crisis and thus was unable to provide employment to those who could be employed Therefore it was necessary to be responsible for their own destiny instead of counting, as in the past, on a certain "welfare state" Hence the rush to a sector hitherto known as a low-income earner, for survival⁷ This sector, commonly known as the informal or the unstructural sector, already provided many jobs in several African countries But thus it was little known in the People's Republic of the Congo where it was of little interest to a population more attached by comfort and the salary security than by activities of a sector that generates very little income

4 Problems of the informal sector

18 In a good number of African countries, attempts to define the concept more or less successfully gave an idea of the said sector But this was difficult in the People's Republic of the Congo where, due to the fact that all hitherto relied on the State, the concept of the informal sector had never been the subject of serious reflexions or accepted in the vocabulary of the local population However, this did not prevent the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Manpower to request the few consultancy firms on the spot such as BERETEC and CIATA to examine the problem As was expected, the newness of the problem, coupled with the lack of adequate statistical data constituted a serious handicap, if it is accepted that the definition of the informal sector far from being confirmed to a single and unmovable formula, can vary depending on situations and the level of each country's economic development

4 1 Definition of the informal sector

1 Rather than attempting to give a scholarly definition of a phenomenon which, it should be provided out, is new in the People's Republic of the Congo, BERETEC, while drawing attention to the importance of the sector, adopted a procedure which aid emphasis on certain characteristics of this sector's activities Amongst such characteristics the following should be especially highlighted

1 1 Insufficient use of manpower

⁷ Maldonado Carlos. Small-scale urban farmers of French-speaking Africa

In order to promote small and medium size enterprises, public authorities defined such enterprises as those with a staff ranging from 5 to 150 employees. It is on the same basis that the informal sector in Congo was defined as a sector whose labour

force did not exceed five employees

1.2 Diverse activities

Concurrently, it was accepted that the informal sector included diverse activities ranging from the exercise of various professions to small-scale retail trade and through to the distribution of goods and services.

1.3 Use of traditional methods and technologies

1.4 On-the-job training

2. According to the World Bank where studies on the informal sector were undertaken in order to create jobs, the informal sector is presented as a struggle for survival, indeed, the struggle of the poor against hunger and unemployment. As a sector of diverse activities, it includes registered or unregistered activities characterized by a low level of organization, small scale functioning (very few employees do not belong to the same family), and by a limited use of technology. Furthermore, these activities provide subsistence to some and capital to others⁸

3. For purposes of this project, it should be pointed out that the Steering Committee stated in February 1989 that

"the informal sector refers to family or individual undertakings with very few employees. All non-agricultural and agro-food activities and the sale of foodstuffs included in this definition"

4. According to planners, the informal sector includes low-scale activities of small and medium scale enterprises which are characterized by self-employment and very limited initial capital. It plays a very important role in the national product formation and, as a result, should not be neglected⁹

19. To summarize, it should be stated for purposes of this study that the informal sector in Congo has the following characteristics

- ▶ size of enterprise (micro-unit)
- ▶ little manpower used (self-employment, family or non-family member manpower)

⁸ World Bank document on the definition of the informal sector

⁹ ECA planning service document on the integration of the informal sector in planning

ranging from 0 to 5 people)

- ▶ level of education of operator, low or totally lacking
- ▶ very little money invested
- ▶ no rigorous accounts kept

- ▶ subsistence activities carried out

4.2 Importance of the informal sector

The lack of available data hindered the irrefutable evaluation of the informal sector in the People's Republic of the Congo. However, it meets the people's needs through the supply of cheap goods and services to a good number of people and avoid social uprising by providing employment to the unemployed. The informal sector must provide African countries including Congo with solutions to the serious employment problem so as to obtain social crises. This is to say Congo cannot continue to neglect a sector as this, which has enormous potential. The little attention paid to this sector in the country's economic structures, is partly responsible for the absence of data that ought to make it possible to undertake a quantitative study on the topic.

(1) Economically

Though it appeared inexpedient to attempt to ascertain the contribution of the informal sector to the GDP of a country that for some time had enjoyed an oil boom, this is no longer the case since the onset of the economic crisis. Now, it is but normal that the country undertake an exhaustive inventory of all its resources so as to use them judiciously.

TABLE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL GDP, PRODUCTION AND ADDED VALUE OF THE TRADITIONAL SECTOR

Data Years	Traditional Sector Production	Traditional added value sector	GDP
1982	212,870	142,906	710,028
1983	225,836	146,365	799,245
1984	520,627	164,760	958,509
1985	284,443	177,752	970,850
1986	278,004	170,850	640,407

Source: Unpublished data from the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Economy

22 For the period under review, the informal sector generated 20% of the nation's revenue

23 An analysis of the various activities of the traditional¹⁰ sector, reveals that the sector is dominated by agricultural and commercial activities. Some activities of the sector appeared, however, as activities that support the modern sector such as transport, construction, welding, import, trade. The effect is that this sector can be made fragile structurally. The small-scale production industry

based on the processing of local resources is still very little developed.

(ii) Socially

It was already stated that the informal sector in 1984 employed 478,507 people, that is, 77% of the country's working population. Studies carried out on activities of the informal sector, ever since, have not only confirmed its ability to create jobs but have also recognized its catalyst role at a time when the Congolese public authorities are no more able to guarantee employment for a good number of people. It thus constitutes a reservoir of jobs which in the past were meant for the illiterate and those who were unable to have a job in the modern sector now open to young graduates.

V. WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

1 Women in employment

24 The 1984 census revealed that Congolese women represented 51.34% of the total population and 42.5% of the working population.

TABLE 3. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO AREA AND SEX

Area Sex	Urban	Rural	Total	%
Male	498,012	431,090	929,102	48.66
Female	494,085	486,061	980,146	51.34
Total	992,097	917,151	1,904,248	100

Source: CNSEE - 1984 census

25 Women do not enjoy any privilege because of their number. They are practically left out in

¹⁰

See Annex 6 - Contribution of each branch of the informal sector

the taking of decisions that affect the whole nation and, indeed, become victims of social practices whose establishment they neither contributed to nor were consulted upon. This case, for instance, also applies to access to education and employment.

1.1 Access to education

26 Even though officials of the state's technical services consulted in this respect stated, clearly, that education was open to all without discrimination in practice. This is not true. Traditional values, as well as the type of woman wanted by African societies including Congo have not made it possible for women to benefit from education on the same footing as men.

27 In the rural area, the young girl is rapidly involved in household chores and farm work so as to help her mother, hence few girls attend school.

28 In the urban area, where school attendance is higher, girls leave school too prematurely to enter active life.

1.2 Access to employment

29 The imbalance noticed from the outset between the education of boys and girls explains why there are few girls in paid jobs. Like in all African countries, there are more Congolese women performing functions usually reserved for women such as secretary, typist, mid-wife or social welfare workers, teacher, etc.

30 Out of 51,290 actually working in the civil service 9,232 are women that is 18%. Concurrently out of 112,000 people employed in the private sector 7,952 are women, that is 7.1% of the total number¹¹. It can therefore be deduced that the rest of the female working population which is about 260,861 are in activities of the informal sector in both the urban and rural areas. Indeed, they are engaged in agriculture, (about 50%), small-scale production and trade.

2 Characteristics of women's activities in the informal sector

31 Confronted by employment problems, Congolese women engage themselves in small-scale activities of the informal sector so as to meet their social needs such as lodging, child care, schooling, etc.

32 At the economic and social levels, women supply the population with essential commodities such as food and processed products used as basic foodstuffs. They are found in the markets, along

¹¹ Source: Unpublished statistics from the National Employment and Manpower Authority.

the streets where they sell their products or in the farms Their dynamism is hindered by their limited resources

33 The sampling carried out for purposes of this study was on 142 women engaged in small-scale business sale of agricultural foodstuffs, fishery and imported products, processing of local foodstuffs such as cassava, maize fish, hairdressing and sewing

34 The survey revealed that activities carried out by women in the informal sector differ in several respects from those carried out by men

2 1 Use of local resources

35 Agriculture is far ahead of all activities carried out by Congolese women in the informal sector They participate in this area on the same footing as men The sole difference is that they play a major role in food production According to a deeply rooted tradition in Congo, cassava, the basic foodstuff, should never be cultivated by men These men are rather engaged in the cultivation of cash crops (coffee, cocoa, tobacco, etc.) and in hunting

36 In market gardening and fishing, they produce in the same strength as men They even go further to process fish into dried and smoked fish

2 2 Meeting the people's needs

37 Women's activities in the informal sector are designed to meet the people's needs at fair prices At the beginning, these activities were supposedly meant for the low-income earner But over the years, they become so important that they meet the needs of all social groups irrespective of their income levels

2 3 Subsistence activities

38 Problems that women encounter in carrying out their activities, particularly financial problems, hinder their development and restrict them to daily activities Thus income earned goes directly to meet current expenditures

2 4 Small-scale individual enterprise

39 Most women of the informal sector in Congo prefer to have individual undertakings Hence, they do not want to hear anything about the formation of co-operatives or any type of association, the source of conflicts On the whole, they prefer to manage their businesses alone

TABLE 4: REGROUPING PROSPECT

Position Activity	Yes	No	Non-declared	Total
Small-scale trade	28	86	10	124
Cottage industry	10	8		18
Total	38	94	10	142

40 However, there are some who accept the idea of forming group^d - Apart from the many financial advantages they expect to enjoy such as loans, some of them hope to attain job security by earning a salary

2 5 Insufficient initial capital

41 Congolese women of the informal sector, like those of other African countries, do not wait to amass much capital before starting their own businesses. Their capital, generally meagre at the outset, comes either from family aid received from their husbands or from a member of their various families or from personal savings in a thrift and loan society, "tontine"¹² or from money saved previously while working as a maid or a shop attendant.

**TABLE 5: WOMEN DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO ACTIVITY AND CAPITAL
(IN MILLIONS OF FCFA)**

Capital Activity	<10	10 20	20 30	30 40	40 50	50 60	60 70	70 80	>80	UD	Total
Small-scale	32	27	15	10	1	9		2	23	5	124
Cottage Industry		2	3	2	3	2		2	3	1	18
Total	32	29	18	12	4	11		4	26	6	142

42 It emerges from the above table that 64% of women start their businesses with a capital ranging between 10,000 and 40,000 CFA francs

2 6 Family manpower

Non-family manpower is almost inexistent

2 7 Low income

¹² "Tontine" is a traditional savings society amongst friends or acquaintances which consists of a participant depositing a fixed sum over a fixed period. Participants receive the total amount collected in turns. Its duration varies according to the number of participants.

54 It should, however, be pointed out that though the public authorities had no special policy in favour of the informal sector, this did not, in any way, hamper its development. The proof is that the working population engaged in this sector increased from 315,000 in 1990 to 478,507 in 1984.

55 The 1985 financial crisis and the non-implementation of a substantial part of investment programmes included in the State's development plan, compelled the Government to review its current plan in order to liberalize the economy extensively. That was the objective of the Economic and Social Plan of Action established ever since whose characteristics are

- ▶ liberalization of the economy,
- ▶ establishment of a dynamic rural development plan,
- ▶ multiplication of forms of production and slackening of regulations in force

56 Changes thus introduced in the economy could help promote private initiative.

2 Actions in favour of woman of the informal sector

57 Throughout the People's Republic of the Congo men and women are considered equal. But then this is just the reverse in a society where the predominance of customs is a palpable reality in the social set-up. This is to say that in Congo women do not necessarily enjoy the advantages granted them by the law.

58 This difference in treatment of men and women was best illustrated by the fact that on the rare occasions that Government services attempted to initiate policies in favour of the informal sector, priority was given to activities carried out by men. This explains why the training centre set up by the National Employment and Manpower Authority to train secondary school graduates deemed it necessary to limit this training to carpentry, welding and masonry and, totally, excluded any other discipline likely to interest young girls. Similarly, the National Handicraft Agency set up to implement Governmental policy in this area, pays negligible attention to activities likely to interest women as compared to those generally reserved for men.

59 In the rural area, little attention is paid to women. The good intentions expressed, occasionally, in favour of women are never implemented. That is why due to the lack of adequate technical and communication means, agricultural structures set up within the framework of regional decentralization have failed to help the peasant farmers. Rather they have been devoted to administrative tasks. Since women are in the vast majority in the rural area, they suffer more from such a situation.

60 Indeed, in a bid to rehabilitate, the woman, the Social Affairs Department was created to deal with women's problem in general, its meagre resources have so far reduced effectiveness, always at the expense of women whose living conditions the Department is expected to improve

61 Politically, the "Union Révolutionnaires des Femmes "Congolaises" helped organize the women to be responsible for their own destiny

3 Women's involvement in current programmes

62 Since public authorities have no specific policy in favour of women of the informal sector, it is hard to imagine that these women can be fully involved in economic development programmes With regard to the State, there is every indication in the objectives of the Economic and Social Plan

of Action that women will be given a place in areas such as

- 1 Liberalization of the economy, since they will have the possibility to carry out economic activities on the same footing.
- 2 Dynamic rural development, considering that they represent about 50% of the rural population Participation of public authorities in the rural area will henceforth be beneficial to women.
- 3 Food self-sufficiency, given the role women play in the production and processing of local agricultural products (food and fish products, etc).
- 4 Generalized literacy campaign for the entire population

63 If the above-mentioned broad outlines of the programme adopted by the Government for Congo's economic recovery are attained, then women will, obviously, be the first to benefit from the measures to be taken Thus, as fully-fledged economic operators, women will be able to take their rightful place in the country's development process. However, it should be pointed out that there is no indication yet that this will be the case in the nearest future

64 As regards international organizations, there is need to commend Government's new options to provide the legal base indispensable to activities that these organizations have included in their objectives or ventures

65 The integration of women in the development process has now on become a leitmotif for organizations such as UNICEF or FAO But then it is known that despite mammoth efforts made, in this respect by such organizations, the various social activities carried out in favour of women, directly or indirectly, have had muted impact on the economic activities of women of the informal sector These activities are in areas such as education and health where UNICEF is involved in

vaccination campaigns, improvement of fishing and processing techniques with FAO participation, training in nutrition promoted by both organizations

66 With past experience adapted to the new options mentioned above, international organizations should, henceforth, help women of the informal sector to improve their living conditions by lying emphasis on production. It is within this perspective that the following projects fall

- 1 Project RAF/87/042/UNDP/ECA on "the strengthening of women's role in the informal sector production and management sector" its objective, emanating from specific policies defined in terms of problems that women of the informal sector encounter, is to lead public authorities to incorporate women's activities in the said sector into State's objectives
- 2 Project RAF/87/042/UNDP/UNIFEM to help establish a loan support system so as to boost women's production activities
- 3 Study initiated by UNIFEM on the socio-economic situation of Congolese women as well as the project "women's participation in health development",
- 4 UNICEF project on "women - production - integration in development" meant to improve the living standards of low income rural families,
- 5 WHO participation in the programme on "women and health development",
- 6 Project UNFPA/PRC/89P04 on "the strengthening of the socio-economic activities of women in the outskirts of Brazzaville",
- 7 World Bank survey on women's integration in Congo's economic development process which specially focuses on market - gardening in the urban area and suburbs of Brazzaville,
- 8 German assistance to the hydro-plan in a bid to solve water problems in the Plateaux Region and reduce women's hardship

67 From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the Women's Decade did not succeed to make Congolese authorities consider women as development agents. This made it difficult to gather reliable data on women. To alleviate this situation and in order to better co-ordinate the hitherto scattered activities in favour of women, the idea of setting up a Women's Unit within the Ministry of Planning is becoming a reality. This unit which, inter-alia, would serve as a data bank on women, will seek to carry out and encourage research and promote activities meant to integrate women in the development process. UNDP has accepted to finance the setting-up of this unit and to ensure that it meets its set objectives.

68 However, it is very difficult to evaluate activities carried out in favour of the informal sector in Congo. This is because the rare initiatives taken in the area of agriculture, considered all those actively engaged in the said sector without any discrimination. Whether the women benefitted as much as men is anyone's guess, considering the secondary importance generally accorded to women's activities in similar circumstances. In spite of good intentions, women's integration in the development process must be supported by clear political options which will make them better aware of their role and hence participate, resolutely, in the nation's economic recovery.

VII. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN FAVOUR OF WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

69 The adoption of precise policies on women in the country's economic development objectives, certainly presupposes an indepth knowledge of problems they encounter.

1 Problems

70 They are several and vary from one activity to another, depending on whether they are based on local production or on the marketing of imported products.

1.1 Women's labour intensive tasks

71 The division of labour according to sex does not favour women of the rural areas. They devote most of their time to labour intensive farmwork such as weeding, preparation of the farm, sowing, maintenance of the cultivated farm, harvest. Portage, water fetching and processing of products are tasks performed by women of the rural area. Conversely, men are free to oppose, indeed, adopt strict rules on certain jobs that they reserve for women¹³.

1.2 Illiteracy, and the lack of adequate training

in activities carried out, are factors which equally hamper the development of women of the informal sector. Since they are illiterate or little educated, they do not benefit from the various professional and technical training opportunities that could enable them to increase their output.

1.3 Low production level

72 In the rural areas, even though women produce 98% of food products¹⁴, this production is still very low to satisfy the food needs of the population. This is due to several factors.

a) archaic production methods characterized, inter-alia, by crop rotation, long follow

¹³ Agro-food situation of the People's Republic of the Congo. Ministry of Rural Development - November 1987.

¹⁴ Agro-food Situation of the People's Republic of the Congo. Ministry of Rural Development - November 1987.

and rudimentary techniques.

- b) ageing of agricultural working population due to the massive rural exodus of young people¹⁵ during the oil boom.
- c) reduced cultivated area 1% of arable land is cultivated whereas, according to statistics, there is enough land for each Congolese to own at least 15 ha Besides some mysticism ✓ that certain peasant farmers propagated about the land, it is still under a ground system ~ which levies a ground rent and thus, in spite of the land tenure Law No 52/83 of 21/04/83 which "abolishes all land certificates obtained in the past according to the civil ✓ code or according to the registration system as well as traditional land tenure laws".
- d) lack of guidance for rural women guidance is provided only for the cultivation of export crops and pre-co-operative groupings

14 Fishing difficulties

Production is low despite the great potential This is due to obsolete fishing fears, the absence of a fishermen organization and guidance

15 Marketing problems

They are related to

- ▶ dispersal of producers and the lack of communication infrastructure,
- ▶ lack of storage and preservation facilities,
- ▶ poor distribution network between the towns and the countryside,
- ▶ low portorage of products to be marketed,
- ▶ low prices, hence low income

16 Irregular supply of imported products

They are marketed by women as well as products used in small-scale processing They are at the mercy of whole sale speculators

17 Access to loans

73 This is a serious handicap to the financing of women's activities since they can not guarantee the loans they request from financing institutions

¹⁵ According to the 1984 census young people accounted for 60% of the total population

74 This state of affairs was slightly aggravated by Government's financial austerity measures which led to an increase in women's social tasks and the stagnation of their activities. Considering all types of difficulties that they encounter, for instance, in employment, it has become necessary that concrete measures be taken to help women of the informal sector to fight against this handicap.

2 Policies and Strategies

75 Political options adopted in the 1982-1986 Five-Year Development Plan as well as those spelt out in the Economic and Social Plan of Action can promote activities to be undertaken in favour of women of the informal sector. Hence there is a need to adopt definite policies in favour of women at the national level.

2.1 Recognition of women's in the informal sector and their contribution to the country's economic development

76 Even though there is no statistical information on women, the leading role that they play in the production of essential commodities in the rural area and in the distribution of goods and services in the urban area, says a lot about their contribution to the economic development.

77 Since food production is largely dominated by women, they will, indeed, set the pace in the development of agro-based food industries in the rural areas.

2.2 Incentives to women

78 The policy to open up the country included in the Five-Year Plan has, instead of harmonizing the standards of life in towns and the countryside, encouraged the rural exodus of young people attracted by modern life. This trend must be stopped if the ageing population is to be replaced (in 1984, the average of women engaged in agriculture was 45 years). This therefore means that necessary steps must be taken in the area of rural training and rural animation and that adequate administrative infrastructure must be set up.

2.3 Adequate institutional framework

An Adequate institutional framework must be set up to promote women's economic advancement in the informal sector. This should be done with assistance from the Ministries of Trade, Finance and Planning so as to examine the reasons why women pay taxes. The setting-up of the "Women's Unit" will make it possible to co-ordinate activities and projects meant for women.

2.4 Effective implementation of the 1983 land tenure law

so that women can own sufficient agricultural land

2 5 Integrated assistance policy on women's activity

in the informal sector This presupposes sufficient capital, guaranteed marketing network, popularization of appropriate technologies, adequate technical training in the area which should enable women to increase their production level and properly manage their own activities

2 6 Definition of the participation area of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations :

Though at the level of inter-governmental organizations the recognition of women's role has become a reality as can be attested by various projects initiated in favour of women, the participation of non-governmental organizations is still confused and very limited

3 Preliminary solutions

3 1 Women's organization

79 It is a well known fact that when public authorities talk about organizing women, they, generally, think of grouping them, at all cost, in co-operatives or other similar organizations in order to identify and solve their problems, more easily, in total disregard of their socio-economic realities But the survey carried in Congo, in both the rural and urban areas, reveals that Congolese women are opposed to any idea to group them in like manner To support their rejection of such an idea, they raise the unfortunate experiences they had in pre-co-operative groupings

80 Conversely, they do not seem to oppose groupings based on the traditional structures of associations existing in the rural areas For Governmental's action to be effective, far-reaching and lasting, it should be geared towards this direction Such a task could be committed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Youths as well as to the Social Affairs Department Generally speaking, associations should be based on and should consider difficulties encountered by women's communities concerned

3 2 Institutional framework

81 It is vital to the economic advancement of women of the informal sector The State's watch-word will serve as a base for all activities initiated in favour of women It is very clear that this will be beneficial to women only when the State itself creates a favourable institutional framework

(i) Taxes

82 The working population of the informal sector and, more particularly, the women, are levied various and inexplicable taxes Indeed, experience has shown that sometimes several communal taxes are created concurrently with other taxes A flexible taxation formula adapted to women's various

activities would allay fears in this area, provided its implementation is preceded by a campaign to inform the population

(ii) Guidance

83 So far, women's activities in the informal sector have not been placed under any special technical department. In order to bridge this gap, the idea to set up within the Ministry of Planning a "Women and Development Unit" should be supported. It will serve as a women's data bank and co-ordinate activities and projects meant for women. The setting-up of an inter-ministerial committee within the said unit, will promote data gathering and the dissemination of information on women. UNDP will assist in setting up this unit as soon as possible.

84 However, the existence of such a unit should just exclude the participation of other departments depending on the type of support required: technical training, follow-up of given projects, etc.

3.3 Choice of projects and project beneficiaries

85 In the informal sector, women are engaged in a very wide range of activities. These activities range from agriculture, fishing, trade and cottage industry. In the rural area, agriculture tops the list while trade dominates in the urban area. In the informal sector, it is very important that rural and

urban activities be complementary since all foodstuffs produced in the urban centres because of the high demand (about 52%¹⁶ of the total population)

86 The following economic criteria could be adopted in the choice of activities to be promoted

- the activity's potential to create jobs,
- its ability to meet the essential needs of the population,
- the use of local resources,
- the activity's economic importance in generating revenue for the nation

87 The next problem is to know the group of women who will benefit from the project. Considering the current financial crisis and the fact that women are mostly engaged in subsistence activities, public authorities must consider all these activities without discrimination for such a discrimination would influence the type of support expected from the State, international organizations and other bodies.

¹⁶ Source: CNSEE - Population Distribution based on 1984 Census.

3 4 Support to women of the informal sector

88 It will be necessary to identify, immediately, activities of women of the informal sector and undertake an appropriate study on their respective needs. In the meantime, the following sectors could receive support either from the State or international bodies

(i) Training

89 So far, training programmes instituted have only concerned the young male population. Even though the school attendance rate of the girls is low, no action has been initiated for them in the vocational training programmes. In future, there should be no surprise when their production stagnates. They will thus have no other choice but to confine themselves to small-scale activities with no future plans

90 With regard to the illiterate, the majority of whom are found in the countryside, it is expedient to initiate immediate action and to intensify literacy courses so that this young female group can benefit from rural guidance programmes meant to help them increase their production and income. Women should be informed on the advantages they could derive from the various training courses. The setting-up of regional structures will help convince them. The programmes should be adopted to their needs identified beforehand. In the commercial area, emphasis should be laid on training in management using the simplest methods that will avoid them from considering the exercise as a sheer waste of time

(ii) Loans

91 It was noted that women who, indeed, produce almost all of the country's foodstuffs, have never benefitted from the various institutions set up from the various institutions set up to facilitate the access of the peasant farmers to loans. Loan conditions do not favour women for they have no collaterals and, hardly, find sureties

92 Considering their low level of education and the nature of their activities, more flexible loan conditions should be envisaged for women who are known for paying back loans. Financial institutions could draw inspiration from the practice of the thrift and loan societies, "tontines", to establish a loans-savings scheme which has more incentives¹⁷

(iii) Technical support

93 Technical support is necessary, particularly, in agriculture and the processing of agricultural

¹⁷ Carlos Mandonado. *Young Urban Farmers of French-speaking Africa*, ILO, 1987

products

94 Food self-sufficiency which is the first objective of the next Five-Year Development Plan (1990-1994) can not be attained with the present farming techniques. Technical support is therefore vital to adequate and quality production. This will need

- the use of the most modern agricultural techniques. The Ministry of Rural Development and Youths should undertake studies so as to propose methods adapted to the land,
- the popularization of inputs likely to help peasant farmers to increase the level and quality of their production (improved seeds, fertilizers and insecticides). The Scientific

Research Centre should provide the appropriate food processing technologies

95 Since the acquisition of new technologies depends on the women's financial resources, financial institution should examine the type of loans that can be granted to women

96 However, with regard to technical support, the importance of transport facilities which are a crucial point in Government's policy to open up the country, should not be underestimated

(iv) Marketing support

97 Farmers, very often, encounter problems in the marketing of their products relating either to low prices offered to them and the insufficient marketing channels at their disposal

98 In landlocked areas, the most obvious solution to marketing problems lies, on the one hand, on improving the road channels through the implementation of the programme to open up the country and, on the other hand, on the organization of rural markets by establishing collection points. Failing, the country would have difficulties to stop the influx of agricultural products from neighbouring areas on urban markets

99 In the urban area, even though the marketing of products seems to be better organized thanks to the existence of appropriate markets, the lack of storage and preservation facilities leads to great losses in perishable products

VII CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

100 The review of the State's 1982/86 plan through the adoption of the Economic and Social Plan of Action following the 1985 financial austerity measures, opened the door for private initiative

in Congo's economy. If it is agreed that the country's economic development is predicated upon the reconsideration of local resources, particularly, human resources, then it is obvious that women have a role to play. The proof is that in Congo, the integration of women in the development process has become a present-day topic. Thus, it is impossible that the country develops without the participation of this class of the society which accounts for almost 52% of the total population. But then such integration will only be effective if women's participation is reflected in policies adopted at the national level. The success of such policies depends on the upgrading of women's activities in both of women's activities in both the urban and rural areas and on considering them as a fully-fledged economic operators. The objective is to involve women in the production area of the informal sector where they dominate numerically. Actions to be taken in order to help women increase their production and income could be

- 1 sensitization of the population and recognition of the role of the Congolese women in the country's socio-economic development process,
- 2 definition of women's strategic role in the informal sector through their contribution to meeting the people's needs and using local resources,
- 3 increasing women's output by creating loan facilities for them, securing them appropriate technology and providing them adequate training in the technical area and management,
- 4 intensification of literacy by providing functional literacy courses based on women's activities and needs,
- 5 provision of transport, communication, storage facilities so as to promote the marketing of women's production,
- 6 establishment of food processing enterprises in the rural area

101 Governmental's action should be well explained to women. This will enable them to strive to organize themselves in order to play, from now onwards, the role expected of them.

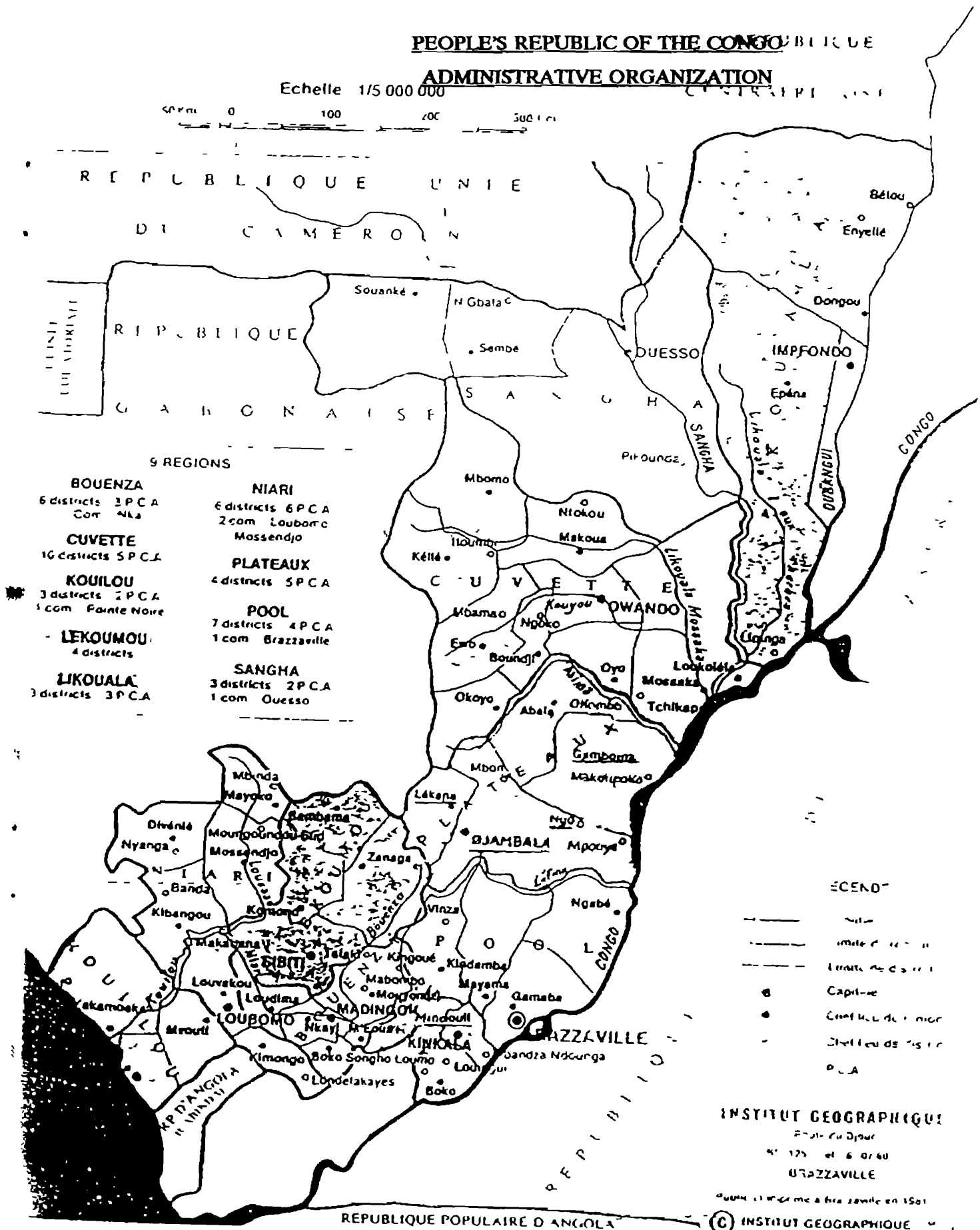
ANNEXE 1

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

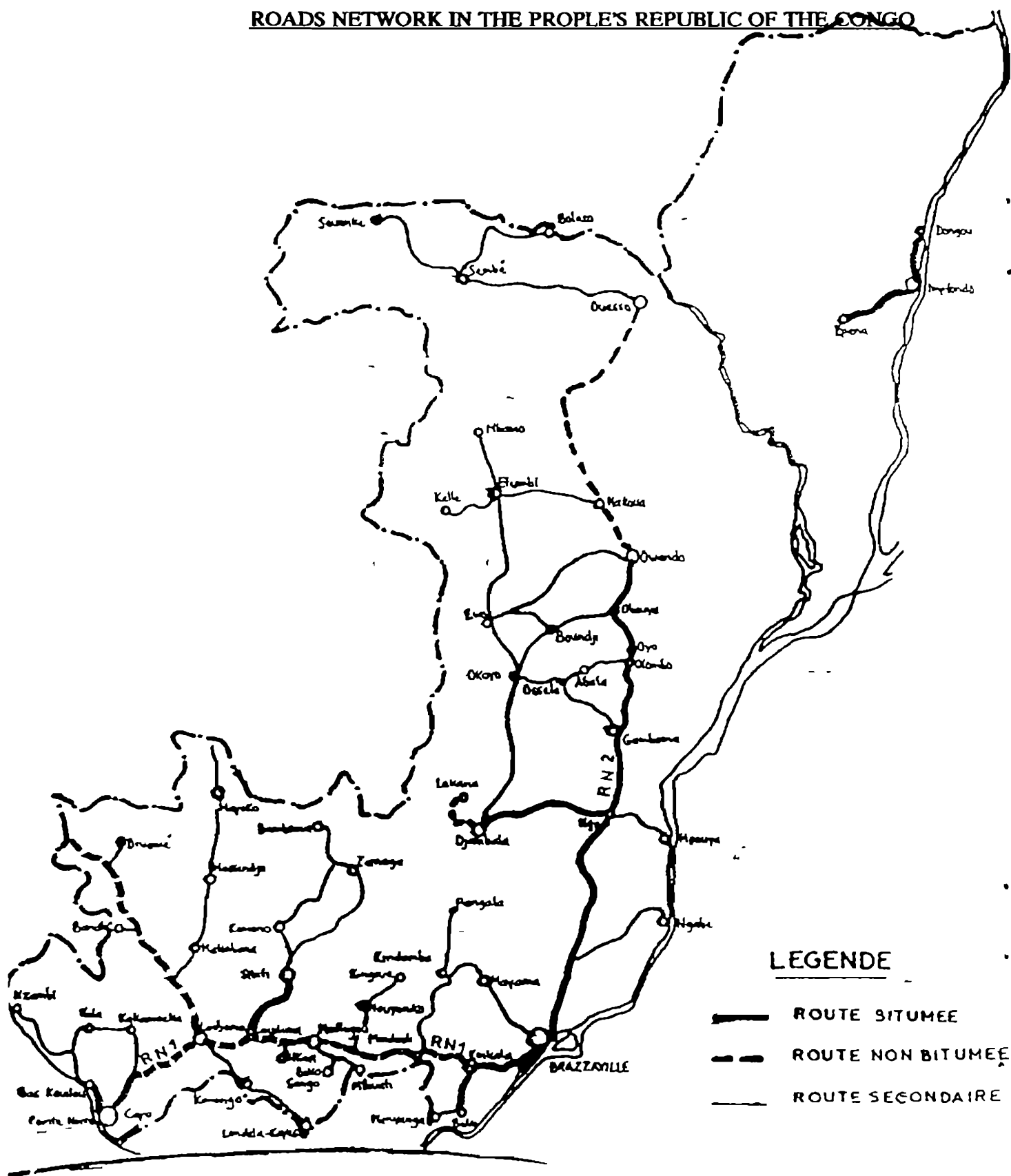
ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

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ROADS NETWORK IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



ANNEX 3POPULATION ACCORDING TO SEX AND AGE GROUPCNSEE: 1984 CENSUS

Sex Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4	161,692	160,075	321,767
05-9	143,258	142,929	286,187
10-14	122,053	122,123	245,176
15-19	102,811	108,483	211,294
20-24	83,831	88,395	172,226
25-29	65,957	70,566	136,523
30-34	48,211	53,231	101,442
35-39	40,203	43,845	84,048
40-44	33,463	34,736	68,179
45-49	32,479	35,979	68,458
50-54	25,562	31,118	56,680
55-59	21,154	26,588	47,742
60-64	16,707	22,540	34,247
65-69	13,056	15,727	28,783
70-74	8,766	10,436	19,202
75-79	3,546	4,396	7,942
80-84	1,738	2,425	4,163
85-89	260	365	625
90-95	269	361	630
ND	4,130	4,906	9,036
TOTAL	929,044	980,204	1,909,248

ANNEX 4**POPULATION DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO COUNCILS AND REGIONS****CNSEE 1984 CENSUS**

Councils		Regions	
Brazzaville	585,812	Koulou	74,870
Pointe-Noire	294,203	Niari	110,003
Louboumo	49,134	Lekoumou	68,287
Nkayi	36,540	Bouenza	150,603
Ouessou	11,939	Pool	184,263
Mossendo	14,469	Plateaux	109,663
		Cuvette	134,744
		Sangha	34,213
		Likouala	49,505
Urbanized population	992,097	Total	917,505
	51.9%		48.04%

ANNEX 5**GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT ACCORDING TO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AT
CURRENT PRICES****UNIT: FCFA MILLIONS**

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Agriculture, livestock, fishing	47,772	48,534	52,130	57,739	59,709
Forest exploitation, forestry	7,984	12,117	14,218	14,592	17,715
Extractive industry	275,270	324,772	413,699	398,041	99,444
Food, timber, tobacco industry	14,282	20,795	25,317	29,443	60,627
Clothing, textile, leather	2,334	2,152	2,710	1,592	1,565
Wood industry	5,639	6,231	6,910	6,954	7,435
Paper industry, printing	389	531	685	769	485
Chemical industry, oil by-products	5,365	9,100	7,157	9,624	17,590
Non-metal mining prod industry	-216	227	-535	1,015	-244
Metal, mechanical works	6,203	5,066	4,205	5,190	3,819
Electricity, gas, water	5,642	9,351	10,119	11,906	9,054
Building + pub works	58,374	55,866	72,112	58,895	68,806
Trade, rest , hotels	93,769	95,787	104,487	110,463	104,877
Transportation, entrep , trade	55,460	57,701	68,529	70,799	71,067
Merchant serv nda	37,972	45,955	49,392	60,186	47,936
Non-merchant service	63,549	75,966	90,305	99,430	103,045
Import duties, taxes	30,332	29,052	37,069	34,212	27,977
Gross domestic product	710,020	799,245	958,509	970,850	640,407

Source: CNSEE, National Accounts 1982 - 1986

ANNEX 6**CONTRIBUTION OF EACH BRANCH OF THE TRADITIONAL SECTOR**

BRANCH OF ACTIVITY	ADDED VALUE (IN FCFA 10)				
	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Agriculture, livestock, hunting and fishing	45,384	44,781	48,522	53,958	56,183
Forestry + forest exploitation	745	1,200	1,526	1,768	1,878
Extractive industries	473	545	427	470	329
Bakeries	1,360	1,400	1,510	1,336	850
Drinks and tobacco	—	—	—	—	—
Other food industries	2,804	3,673	4,811	5,366	5,430
Textiles, clothing + leather	—	—	—	—	—
Paper industries	—	—	—	—	—
Wood industry	885	990	880	1,002	1,100
Chemical industry	—	—	—	—	—
Non-metal minerals	—	—	—	—	—
Mechanical industries	—	—	—	—	—
Electricity, water	—	—	—	—	—
PWB, construction development, building	6,080	5,800	5,800	6,457	5,811
PWB, oil	—	—	—	—	—
PWB, Public works	—	—	—	—	—
Hotels, restaurants	9 950	4,270	5,541	6,151	6,129
Goods and people transport	—	—	—	—	—
Hiring transport material	—	—	—	—	—
Transit transport + handling	—	—	—	—	—
Real estate services	22,970	26,100	27,540	29,990	30,225
Services rendered to enterprises	557	620	1,926	2,150	—
Oil services	—	—	—	—	—
Banks and insurance	—	—	—	—	—
Non-commercial services	550	670	1,200	1,200	1,000
Trade	41,073	44,811	51,132	51,088	45,038
TOTAL	142,906	146,365	164,750	177,757	172,144

Source: Unpublished data from the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Economy

ANNEX 7**LOCAL PRODUCTS PROCESSED BY WOMEN OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR**

RAW MATERIALS	FINISHED PRODUCTS
Cassava	Dry cassava --- flour --- foofoo Retted cassava ----- chikwangu ----- Alcohol
Maize	Flour ----- boiled for consumption Alcohol
Yams	
Groundnuts (peanuts)	Groundnut paste Groundnut oil
Fish	Smoked or salted
Bamboo, cane	Basket making

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ANNEX 9**LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED**

DATE	NAME	INSTITUTION
17/08/1989	Mr A Ouedraogo Mrs Sheela Embounou	UNDP, Assistant Resident Representative UNFPA
18/08/1989	Mr C Amouali Mrs D Gazania Mr J Kinguengu Mr Matamouna	Director of Human Resources, Ministry of Planning Ministry of Planning Ministry of Planning Head of Economic Accounts Service, Ministry of Planning
21/08/1989	URFC	
22/08/1989	Mr Goedefroy Nzambi Mr Toukoulou FAO Representative	Director of Studies/Planning, National Planning & Employment Authority DSP/Ministry of Industry and Handicraft
23/08/1989	Mr Ouemba Mrs Georgette Poaty	Social Service/UNHCR PSWE/Promotion Service Women Enterprise
25/08/1989	Mr M Dia Mrs A Nsakaboueya Mr Jean Moelet	DSP/Ministry of Higher Education World Bank Representative In charge of World Bank Programme DSP/MRD
27/08/1989	Mission to Owando	
28/08/1989		Regional Director/Plan Regional Director Social Affairs Department of Commerce Department of Rural Development
30/08/1989	Mrs C Mbengue	UNICEF
31/08/1989	Mrs H Kinongono	Director General/Social Affairs
01/09/1989		
05/09/1989	Mrs D Gazania	Planning

ANNEX 10OFFICE VISITED

DATES	PLACES
02/09/1989	Centre des Femmes de Production Artisanale, Biso - Basi
04/09/1989	Meeting with women of Biso - Basi
05/09/1989	The URFC Dyeing Group