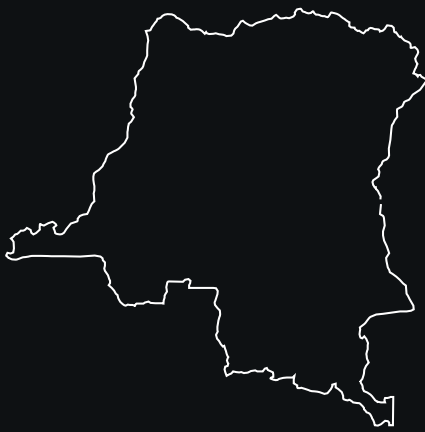




IOM International Organization for Migration



D. R. CONGO

MAPPING EXERCISE
LONDON, NOVEMBER 2006



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The aim of this Mapping Report is to guide IOM's outreach activities and communications strategies. The report does not purport to be exhaustive. The mapping consultant who conducted the exercise and wrote the report on behalf of IOM has taken every effort to ensure accuracy in his/her reporting and the views expressed in this report are his/hers. IOM cannot be held responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies.

INTRODUCTION

AIM OF THE MAPPING EXERCISE, TARGET GROUP AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the mapping exercise carried out by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was to identify the main channels of information used by potential beneficiaries of IOM's voluntary return programmes, which are open to asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The aim was also to identify the location of their communities in the UK. The ultimate goal of the mapping exercise is to help IOM to improve its communications with diaspora communities in the United Kingdom through media articles, advertisements and presentations to community groups.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) mapping exercise was part of a second round of mapping exercises, following the success of a programme which began with the Brazilian community in December 2005 and continued with exercises covering Angolan, Mozambican, and other groups.

IOM designed a questionnaire, which was also translated into French, the official language in the DRC, and divided into two sections. The first section was about information channels and other sources of information (i.e. voluntary organisations, religious organisations, and meeting places) available to Congolese people in the UK. It also enquired about the geographical location of Congolese communities in the UK. The second section of the questionnaire requested baseline data from each respondent about their age, gender and length of stay in the UK.

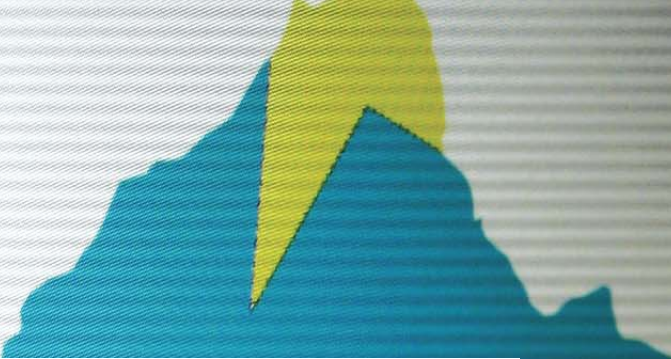
A Congolese national was employed on a part-time basis as a mapping consultant to engage with the Congolese community and collect the necessary information. The mapping consultant's inside knowledge of his community and established contacts with its members in the UK proved to be an essential resource for this exercise. Most Congolese people would only respond easily to somebody who could communicate with them in their own language.

The mapping exercise used a number of approaches to collecting data, including in-depth interviews with multipliers¹ and the distribution of questionnaires. Extensive networking was carried out to identify media, community organisations, religious leaders and individuals that interact with Congolese people. The field work took place between September and November 2006. A large number of questionnaires were distributed through Congolese organisations but the response was very low. Only a few questionnaires were returned to the consultant. However, the leaders of organisations that were contacted proved to be sufficiently informative for the purpose of the exercise and interviews with different organisations tended to generate similar answers.

This report includes tables and charts resulting from the interviews and questionnaires. In addition, IOM has created an extensive list of contacts which merges data gathered directly from completed questionnaires with information provided by the multipliers during in-depth interviews. This resource will be used by the Information team at IOM to disseminate information on the voluntary return programmes to Congolese people across the country.

It is important to emphasise that the mapping exercise relied on networks and that the questionnaire was completed and returned by Congolese people on a voluntary basis. The lack of diversity observed amongst Congolese people suggests that information from interviews could reasonably

¹ This term is used to indicate individuals or organisations that are well known amongst diaspora groups and could, therefore, play a key role in delivering information.



be extended to the entire community. Figures can be extrapolated to the community level without much risk. However, the estimates in this report should be viewed from a qualitative rather than a strictly quantitative perspective because of the difficulty of making precise estimates.

Questionnaires were distributed in English and French. Interviews were also conducted in the Congolese languages, Lingala and Swahili, whenever it was necessary.

This report is an attempt to describe a community of relatively recent migration that has grown considerably over the past fifteen years. It is now one of the largest sub-Saharan French-speaking groups in the UK.

1 INFORMATION CHANNELS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to identify the main channels of information used by Congolese people in the UK. The questions were divided into four categories:

- media (the most common media sources used by community members);
- use of services (transport, phones, and local services);
- sources of information preferred by respondents;
- community groups and other organisations (voluntary and religious organisations).

The contact details given by respondents for media, community centres, and religious organisations were merged with the contact details provided by the multipliers. This list of contacts² is an action plan for IOM, containing details of organisations and agencies with which IOM should liaise to increase awareness of its voluntary return programmes among the Congolese community in the UK.

Many Congolese people were aware of IOM when the mapping exercise began but the interviews revealed that the Congolese community have either a distorted view of IOM's work, or incomplete information about it. This made Congolese people reluctant to engage with the mapping exercise even though it was carried out anonymously. Nonetheless, the mapping consultant did establish better contacts and was able to promote a greater awareness of IOM programmes.

The DRC has endured political and social turmoil since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960. In the post-independence turmoil, Colonel Mobutu seized and held onto power for thirty-two years until he was deposed by Laurent Kabila's rebellion, which came out of eastern Congo in 1997. The 1998 insurrection by rebels linked to Rwanda and Uganda triggered a war involving six other nations. The UN accused the warring sides of looting natural resources and prolonging the conflict.

DRC's population of 56 million is split into many ethnic groups. The country is also divided into at least 210 linguistic groups, including French, Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo and Tshiluba. The dominant languages are French (the official language), Lingala, which is spoken all over Western Congo, including the area of the highly populated capital Kinshasa, and Swahili, in the war-torn Eastern Congo.

The migration of Congolese people to the UK is a recent phenomenon. Most Congolese migrants arrived in the UK after passing through other African countries. They began arriving in the UK during the late 1980s and early 1990s, whilst a substantial second wave of migration occurred in the late 1990s. These periods correspond, respectively, to the last years of Mobutu's reign and to the beginning of the war in the East.

Congolese people in the UK maintain close ties with their relatives back in the DRC. They often seek information about their native country. Most phone home regularly and often support the extended families they have left in the DRC financially. The men tend to gather informally in Congolese pubs and restaurants, where news is spread by word of mouth. The same can be said about food shops, which are frequented more by women. News is also spread in the Congolese community during community gatherings, such as funerals and cultural celebrations (mostly music events). Congolese people often rely on word of mouth rather than written materials.

² This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

Official figures estimate that there are around 20,000 - 30,000 Congolese people in the UK but community leaders give higher estimates of between 30,000 to 40,000 people. None of these estimates is based on a reliable census nor do they stem from accurate projections³.

Most Congolese people prefer to maintain close ties with their community and live in areas with a high concentration of fellow Congolese. Most live in the Greater London area, particularly north, south, and east London. The consultant visited the London Boroughs of Islington, Newham, Redbridge, Haringey, Hackney, and Barking, as well as Croydon, for the mapping exercise. There are also some smaller populations in other boroughs. Due to the Government's dispersal scheme, there is a significant number of Congolese people in other regions of the UK, including the West Midlands (Birmingham), Manchester, Newcastle, Bristol, Leeds, Newport in Wales, Sheffield, Southampton and Glasgow (Cowairs).

The majority of Congolese people in the UK are refugees from war. They are people who have been, or are still involved in, the asylum application process. This explains the connection that most of them have with community organisations in this field. Another key factor that explains the importance of their links with these organisations is the barrier of language. French is the official language in DRC. It is used in education, administration and in all public institutions. It is a reliable indicator of someone's level of education. Many Congolese people in the UK come from poorer backgrounds or from areas where education was seriously affected by the war. This results in a low literacy in French. The English language is even more alien to them. So, they depend on the leaders of their community organisations who, in most cases, act as their intermediaries.

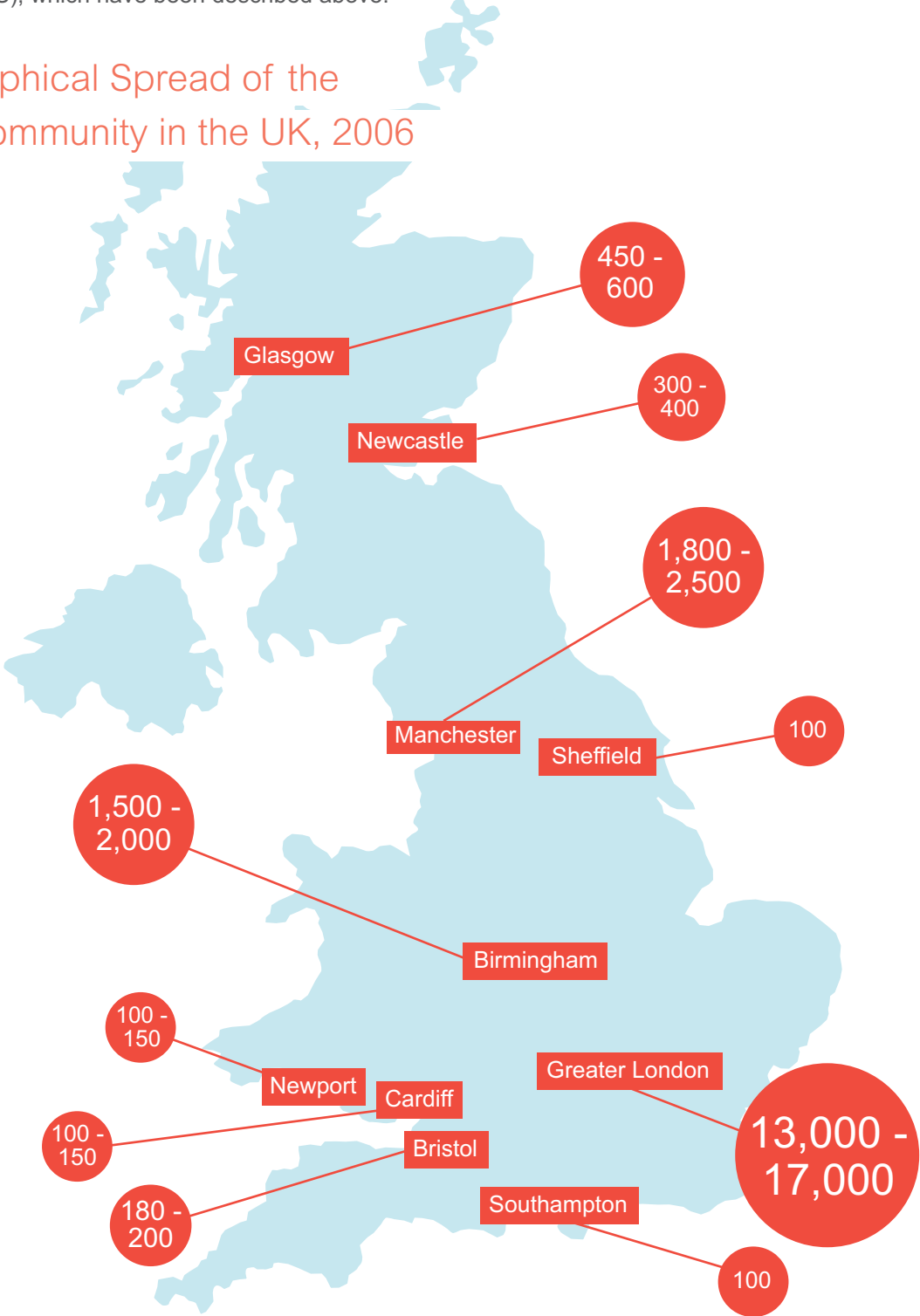
The main religious groups in the DRC are Roman Catholic (over 50% of the community), Protestant (20%), and Muslim (less than 10%). An important phenomenon is the rise of Christian Evangelical churches, which mainly draw congregations from the Roman Catholic Church. This pattern is mirrored in the Congolese diaspora of the UK. Religious organisations offer an opportunity to stay in contact with the community, seek support, and find relief in an alien environment. Congolese Evangelical churches are very active. They have an almost aggressive approach that reaches even into Congolese households and Congolese ministers have a strong influence over their followers. Religion plays an important role in the community and its leaders constitute an important group of multipliers.

³ Most of the Congolese people that were interviewed live in council flats and the National Asylum Support System (NASS) would be a source of information about the number of Congolese families in the UK.

Population in Urban Areas

The map below displays the areas in which significant numbers of Congolese people live in the UK. These figures are estimates from the various sources (respondents, leaders of organisations, Home Office, NASS), which have been described above.

Geographical Spread of the DRC Community in the UK, 2006



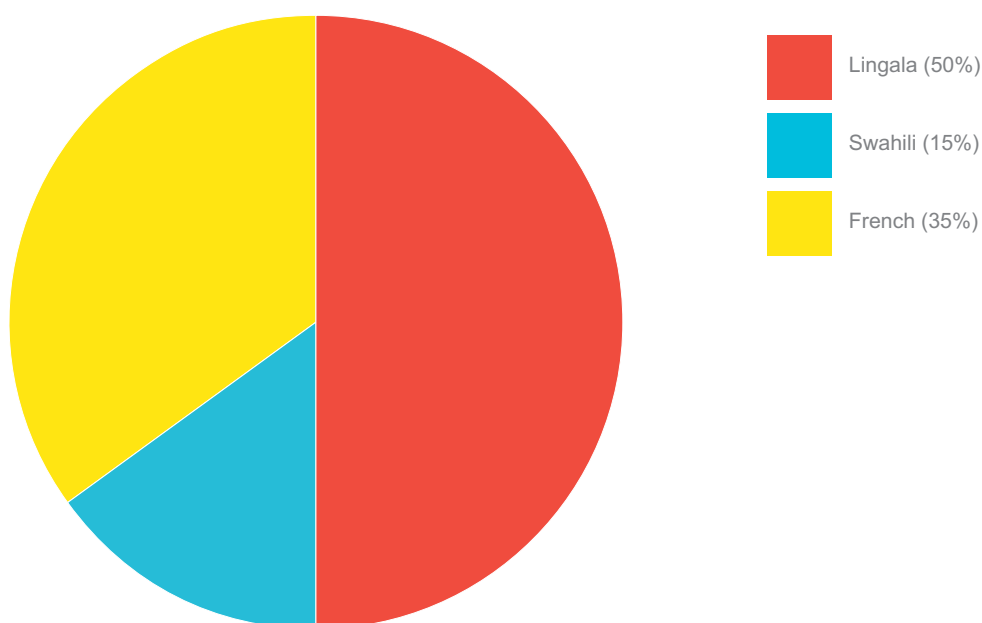
Based on estimates supplied by Community Leaders.

1.2 MEDIA

A clear distinction should be made between the poorly educated majority of the Congolese community and the small minority with a good education, who have access to most kinds of modern media. The information in this report relates to the first group, since they are more likely to include the individuals who could be assisted by IOM.

Respondents were asked in which language they best understood information in the form of newspapers, leaflets, radio, or television. The majority preferred Lingala (50%), followed by French (35%) and Swahili (about 15%). Two other languages were mentioned, Kikongo and Tshiluba, but they are insignificant compared to the main languages.

Figure 1: Preferred Language



Most respondents said that they spoke at least two languages. A respondent might come from the Swahili-speaking Eastern part of the country and speak Swahili on a daily basis but he or she might also understand information presented in Lingala and, to some extent, in French. Both the Swahili- and Lingala-speaking respondents tended to identify Lingala, French and any community language of their own as the languages they used or understood. Lingala is understood, if not spoken, by most of the respondents.

All the community leaders we contacted could speak French very well and were also fluent in English. The questionnaires were mostly filled in by members of this group. Thanks to their language skills they often acted as an intermediary between newcomers and local authorities.

The interviews suggested that most Congolese people do not read newspapers. Instead, they read the very few Congolese magazines that circulate in the UK containing news about both the DRC and the diaspora. Television, particularly African channels, is the medium most used by Congolese people, whilst radio is least used. Use of the Internet by the community is very low.



Readership of Newspapers

Respondents were asked which newspapers and other publications they read the most. The newsletter *Gazzeti*, published in Swahili and French, circulates among people in the community who are in contact with the Congolese organisation UMOJA. But, there does not appear to be a daily Congolese newspaper and language barriers prevent most Congolese people from reading UK newspapers.

Magazines

Four magazines were identified that appear to be popular with Congolese people, each with its own character. These magazines are not published on a regular basis and they often struggle to survive. *Grands Lacs* is the most popular. It is published in French and run by a businessman who lives in Kinshasa and London. It used to be the only Congolese magazine in the UK and, before the emergence of other magazines, dominated its market. It used to carry news both from the DRC and the UK diaspora but more recently it has concentrated on covering Congolese politics and, consequently, it has lost many of its readers.

Pendro is a sensationalist Congolese magazine that has won a large readership among the UK Congolese community. In particular, women constitute most of *Pendro's* readers. The magazine is published in Lingala, which is spoken in the Western DRC including the capital Kinshasa, and it features stories reflecting community concerns. It does not hesitate to resort to controversy and it presents some of its contents in a cartoon-like format. During an interview with IOM, its chief editor said, “*Pendro* is a commercial product that sells what people want to read; its contents are just a reflection of the Congolese community in the UK.” IOM advertises in this magazine.

The third magazine, *Pyramides*, is targeted at all French-speaking Africans but it has strong links with Congolese Christian Evangelical churches. The magazine does not have the popularity of *Pendro* but it is read by church ministers and church-goers. Lastly, *Renaissance* is a much less well known magazine and information about it is sparse. It seems to have disappeared from the news-stands because of financial difficulties.

Congolese people are hungry for information from the DRC and the diaspora but community members are not always willing to pay for a magazine. Publications are often available free outside London but in the capital they have to pay. The magazines are financially supported by adverts from Congolese businesses and private notices.

Radio and Television

Television is by far the most popular medium through which community members obtain information. Two TV channels, in particular, were repeatedly named by respondents: the African TV channels, *OBE TV* and *BEN TV*.

BEN TV (Bright Entertainment Network) is a British television channel which was launched in 2003 and is aimed mainly at expatriate Africans living in Europe. The channel has been free to air on Sky Digital since 2006. *OBE TV* (Original Black Entertainment TV) was launched in September 2004. It shows films, cooking, advertisements, sports and talk shows, as well as church service programmes.

Every Saturday, for a few hours, both these TV channels offer a special programme for Congolese people, which is presented in French and Lingala. Music events and religious gatherings, two very important social activities for Congolese people, are often reported on these shows.

Radio does not play an important part in the community. Almost none of the interviewees named a single radio station and no radio station was identified which had a Congolese audience in the UK. However, the Editor-in-Chief of *Pyramides* did say that his magazine planned an expansion of its activities into radio.

Internet

Use of the Internet by the Congolese community is low. None of the respondents to the questionnaire said that they went online.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Two media outlets emerged clearly from this mapping exercise as most favoured by the Congolese community: TV and Congolese magazines.

- IOM should certainly continue advertising regularly on the *OBE* and *BEN TV* channels in both French and Lingala. Possibly, this advertising should be accompanied by stories of Congolese people who have returned home.
- IOM should continue to advertise in *Pendro* and *Pyramides* magazines. The first is popular with a particularly female readership. The second reaches people who are linked to the Evangelical churches. Adverts, supported by stories of return, would reach Congolese people directly, reinforcing their knowledge of the voluntary return programmes and potentially countering distorted views of IOM's work.

1.3 USE OF SERVICES

Transport

A number of questions were included in the questionnaire to investigate where IOM should advertise its voluntary return programmes. Respondents were asked what means of transport they usually used. Buses were used most often, followed by the Underground and mainline trains. A smaller number of respondents used personal transport, such as a car.

Phone Calls, Money Transfer and Food Stores

Congolese people maintain strong ties with their country of origin. Interviews suggested that the usual way they stay in contact is through phone calls via a landline. Congolese people use the numerous pre-paid international cards that are available on the market and make calls from home or sometimes from phone shops owned by other Africans.

Congolese people in the UK support their relatives in the DRC financially and they often make use of services such as money transfer and goods dispatch. Some of the most popular businesses used by the Congolese are: KPM (in Greater London and major UK cities); Kanga Worldwide Business (London); Kinperformance Ltd (London); TMT Express Ltd (London); and the widely-used Western Union.

The following Congolese food shops were popular with the DRC community: Kin2000 (London); New Way Food Store (London); Ma Mapasa (London) and De Amicitia Business (London).

Local Services

Congolese people often approach local councils and Job Centres for help with housing and employment. Congolese people are often referred by Job Centres and local councils for employment in low skilled jobs, so these centres can be effective places for displaying information.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- IOM should advertise its programmes in the most popular money transfer businesses. KPM appears to be the most popular and it is well represented across the UK. It is strongly recommended that leaflets, translated into both French and Lingala, are made available in its offices all over the country.
- IOM should advertise the voluntary return programmes in Congolese food shops and music stores.
- Bus stops in urban areas with a high Congolese population could also be used for advertising campaigns by IOM.
- IOM should negotiate agreements with international pre-paid phone card companies to advertise its activities.

1.4 PREFERRED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Congolese people often obtain information by word of mouth. They tend to rely on information circulating within the community and there can be a risk that it becomes distorted. News is spread quickly during social events and meetings. However, when they were asked where information would be most accessible to them, most respondents suggested Congolese food shops, bus stops (in areas with many Congolese residents), money transfer outlets, and goods dispatch businesses. Leaflets with text translations were seen as the best way of making information available.

1.5 COMMUNITY GROUPS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Help, Advice and Support

Congolese people tend to seek help within their own community because of their strong ties with their families and their religious communities. They often receive advice and support on issues related to their stay in the UK from the kind of organisations that the consultant met during the mapping exercise. These community organisations act as intermediaries, directing Congolese people to the local services they need. Given the key role of the churches in their social life, the Congolese seek help and relief from these religious organisations too. Evangelical churches, in particular, have an influence that extends deep into Congolese households. This sometimes generates conflicts that lead to the setting up of new groups. This phenomenon appears to be part of a constant dynamic within the community.

Religious Centres

As mentioned above, the Congolese community in the UK is mostly Christian and a large majority regularly attend church services. There are two main groups. Roman Catholics attend services in local English-speaking churches, although there is a low participation because of the language barrier. However, more and more local Catholic churches offer services in French or Lingala. At Finsbury Park the Congolese community is in charge of the services for three Sundays in a month (the first, third and fourth from 2pm to 4pm). Notre-Dame de France in Leicester Square, a church for French-speaking people in London, also attracts Catholic Congolese families. Evangelical churches are the second group. They have good attendances because they are presided over by Congolese ministers. Services are held in languages understood by Congolese people and they appeal to community members who cannot speak or understand French.

There are numerous small religious organisations in the community. AIRS Ministries is probably the largest one. It is based at Trinity Community Centre in Manor Park, London and is also represented in other UK cities. There are also other organisations in Barking (Essex); East Ham (London); Stoke Newington (London); and Walthamstow (London). The full list of organisations and religious centres is in the list of contacts.

Other Community Gatherings

The consultant did not identify any specific celebrations for Congolese people in the UK although people do meet informally at music events when bands are on tour in the UK from the DRC or from other parts of the Congolese diaspora, especially France and Belgium.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It was not easy to develop strong contacts with religious leaders, particularly with pastors of the Evangelical churches. They were reluctant to provide an estimate of the number of Congolese people living in the UK. However, IOM should continue to try and build links with these church ministers because they have influence in the community.

- IOM should liaise with the main multipliers who were identified during the mapping exercise to implement outreach activities, particularly since word of mouth is the way most respondents obtain information. The list of contacts is an essential resource for this purpose.
- IOM should continue to produce leaflets in French and Lingala that include successful stories of returnees and make them more widely available.
- Most importantly, IOM must engage with religious organisations to arrange presentations and information stalls. However, this needs to be done with care, particularly in liaising with the Evangelical churches.

2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The second section of the questionnaire sought baseline data about each respondent's age, gender and length of residence in the UK.

2.1 GENDER

Interviews with community leaders and individuals during the mapping exercise suggested that Congolese men and women are present in the community in almost equal proportions. Men, however, seem to come forward more readily and they are the ones who often deal with administrative matters on behalf of their families. Glasgow is, however, different. This city has more Congolese women than men. In particular, many single Congolese mothers live in Glasgow.

2.2 AGE

Interviews suggested quite a young population. It appears that most men are between 25 and 45 years old. Women are a little younger; most are aged between 20 and 35. Another important group is represented by children under 15 years. The proportion of Congolese people over 50 is very small.

2.3 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN BRITAIN

Few Congolese people have lived in the UK for more than twenty years. A median of 8-12 years was noticed during the interviews but this may reflect the fact that most respondents were community leaders.

3 CONSTRAINTS

The Congo mapping exercise has been an interesting although difficult survey. It was interesting because it revealed the existence of a large but invisible community in the UK. During the course of the mapping exercise, religious centres, music events and informal gatherings have been shown to engage many Congolese people both within and outside Greater London. The Congolese community is present in all the major cities of the UK. However, they remain invisible because the organisation of the community does not seem to be very well developed and it does not have a single large umbrella organisation that could allow the community to express itself. Moreover, language barriers and the low level of education of the majority of the community hinder the ability of the community to emerge as a collective entity.

There was noticeable reluctance among Congolese people to take part in our anonymous survey and fill in the questionnaire. The reasons for this have already been discussed above. In addition, many Congolese people had a distorted idea of IOM's work. They equated IOM's voluntary return programme with forced removal. These misunderstandings did not help the smooth running of the mapping exercise.

At the same time, interviews with community leaders have shown that some Congolese have encountered difficulties living in the UK. Some of them may be willing to take advantage of IOM's voluntary return programmes. They need clear explanations about IOM's work and about the help that would be available for reintegration back home. There is a need for an advertising campaign that involves community organisations as well as religious leaders.

Most people who had heard about IOM were living in London. Congolese people living in other parts of the UK also need to be engaged and their communities contacted. More time is required to establish more contacts and build trust between IOM and the community, in order to build on what the mapping exercise was able to achieve.



4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mapping exercise achieved its aims by identifying the main channels of information used by Congolese people in the UK, and the main locations of their communities. It also created a list of useful contacts. Key recommendations include the following.

- IOM should continue engaging with the Congolese community and raise awareness of IOM's voluntary return programmes among those who can benefit from them.
- IOM should continue advertising on OBE and BEN TV in both French and Lingala. Most Swahili-speaking Congolese people also understand these two languages.
- IOM should advertise in these Congolese magazines: Pendro; Pyramides; and Grands Lacs. Contacts should be established with their editors and the most effective approach discussed with them.
- Respondents said that travel by bus was their usual means of transport. IOM should continue to advertise on buses in areas with a large population of Congolese community members.
- IOM should liaise regularly with the main multipliers to ensure a wide dissemination of information about the voluntary return programme. Particular attention should be paid to religious organisations.
- IOM should advertise on international pre-paid phone cards.

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