🌍 DR Congo: Investment Priorities & Development Outlook

A Multi-Source Research Summary

I. MACROECONOMIC FRAMEWORK & WORLD BANK PARTNERSHIP

The DRC's economy has shown notable resilience, with GDP growth reaching 6.5% in 2024 and projected to remain above 5% in 2025, driven largely by the extractive sector. However, the escalation of armed conflict in the eastern part of the country has placed severe strain on public finances, creating a significant humanitarian and social burden. International Monetary Fund

On the financing side, the World Bank signed nearly $2 billion in new financing agreements with the DRC in June 2025, covering five strategic projects including the Inga 3 hydropower development, governance reform, infrastructure, digital transformation, and urban resilience. As of March 2025, the World Bank's total active portfolio in the DRC exceeded $7 billion across 18 national and 2 regional projects. Ecofin Agency

The World Bank's Country Partnership Framework for the DRC, covering 2022–2026, prioritizes stronger governance and stability, with a particular focus on the country's troubled eastern regions. Africa Energy Portal

II. AGRICULTURE & NUTRITION

This is perhaps the DRC's most urgent structural challenge. Rural households account for 55% of the DRC's total population and derive more than 80% of their income from agriculture, making productivity growth a necessary condition for reducing rural poverty. Yet cereal productivity stands at only 50% of the Sub-Saharan Africa average. Pnda

The government has worked to reduce rural poverty by modernizing agricultural production systems, improving nutrition and food security, and mobilizing public and private sector investment. It allocated 8% of its 2016 budget to agriculture — up from 3% in prior years — approaching the 10% Maputo Declaration target. Pnda World Bank projects include subsidies for climate-smart and nutrition-smart agriculture, rural road rehabilitation, and support for smallholder farmers.

The food security situation remains acute. An alarming 28 million people in the DRC now face acute hunger (IPC Phase 3 or above), a number that grew by 2.5 million following the most recent outbreak of conflict. Included in this group are 3.9 million people experiencing emergency levels of hunger. UN World Food Programme

The World Food Programme reached 4.5 million people with food and cash assistance between January and September 2025, and trained 70,000 smallholder farmers in post-harvest loss management, literacy, business skills, and collective marketing in eastern DRC. Over 1 million young children and pregnant or breastfeeding women received treatment for acute malnutrition in 2025. UN World Food Programme

III. LOW EARTH ORBIT (LEO) SATELLITE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

This sector is experiencing a breakthrough moment for the DRC. SpaceX's Starlink officially launched in the DRC after the Congolese Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (ARPTC) approved a telecommunications license to Starlink DRC S.A. in May 2025. The move is designed to bridge the country's severe digital divide by providing high-speed internet to underserved regions across the country's vast terrain. Space in Africa

The DRC had previously banned Starlink in March 2024 over security concerns that the service could be misused by armed groups, particularly the M23 insurgency. The reversal came after diplomatic and regulatory negotiations. Congo has some of the lowest internet penetration rates on the continent, with only about 30% of the population online as of 2023. Telecoms Tech News

Ambitions go further. The DRC government has been exploring a $400 million satellite partnership with China, following a 2024 agreement with MonacoSat for a nationwide connectivity rollout. The government has framed the satellite as a cornerstone of a broader digital push targeting $1.5 billion of sector investment by 2030. Tildee

On the cellular side, SES and Africa Mobile Networks (AMN) expanded support to more than 1,100 base stations in the DRC, increasing population coverage by 27% and bringing mobile services to more than 5.8 million additional people, particularly in rural and underserved areas — with 292 new base stations deployed in just 90 days. Communicationsafrica

Key remaining priorities include fiber-optic backbone networks, mobile broadband and 5G expansion, domestic data centers, and cybersecurity capacity — all areas where foreign investment and partnership are actively being sought. International Trade Administration

IV. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

This is one of the DRC's most critical and deteriorating areas. The DRC fell ten places in RSF's 2025 World Press Freedom Index, now ranking 133rd out of 180 countries. More than half of journalists killed in the DRC over the last 30 years have died in the country's eastern provinces. RSF

Between January 2024 and January 2025, RSF recorded 52 press freedom violations in North Kivu alone, including destruction, looting, physical attacks, and killings. At least 26 community radio stations were looted or forced to close, and two journalists were murdered within a single

month. The M23 armed group has regularly attempted to seize control of radio stations to use them for propaganda. RSF

On the institutional side, the DRC has more than 7,000 professional journalists, 4,000+ radio stations, 150 TV channels, and 500 newspapers, but the state broadcaster lacks independence, and local authorities, militias, and politicians routinely pressure media outlets. The media regulator CSAC has been accused of making decisions that hinder reliable information, particularly since the M23's capture of Goma in January 2025. Reporters Without Borders

There is, however, a recent moment of diplomatic progress. In a meeting with RSF, the DRC's Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson Patrick Muyaya committed to concrete press freedom measures: establishing a rapid alert system for journalists in danger, reducing accreditation fees for foreign journalists, and organizing training for law enforcement on the country's 2023 press freedom law. RSF RSF welcomed the commitment but called for swift, concrete implementation.

V. CONSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE REFORMS

The World Bank's Systematic Country Diagnostic for the DRC argues that building long-term resilience requires not only infrastructure investment, but a focus on inclusive institutions, modernizing the national identity system, establishing preconditions for a demographic dividend, and strengthening legal and governance frameworks to make the country's exceptional resource endowment work for the population rather than entrenching elite capture. World Bank

Critics have raised concerns that World Bank programs have historically prioritized large-scale industrial projects over rural electrification and smaller community-driven initiatives, and that external institutions sometimes fail to account for historical precedent when trying to influence Congolese governance. Wikipedia

Summary Table

Sector	Past Achievements	Current Priorities	Future Goals
Agriculture	Budget increased to 8% for sector; WB rural programs	Feed 28M food insecure; train	Reach 10% Maputo target; agri-productivity reform
Nutrition	WFP reached 4.5M people (Jan–Sep 2025)	Treat acute malnutrition in conflict	Nutrition-smart agriculture integration
Telecom /	Starlink licensed (2025);	$400M satellite deal;	$1.5B digital investment by
Press	2023 press freedom law	Alert systems;	Full decriminalization of
Macro/ Governanc	6.5% GDP growth (2024); $7B+ WB portfolio	IMF fiscal reforms; Inga 3	Inclusive growth; eastern stability

The DRC stands at a pivotal crossroads — possessing extraordinary natural wealth and a young population, yet burdened by conflict, governance gaps, and infrastructure deficits. The convergence of World Bank financing, satellite connectivity breakthroughs, and tentative press freedom commitments signals genuine momentum, but the ongoing crisis in the east remains the defining obstacle to sustainable development.