1. Country and Sector Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced important political and economic gains in the past nine years. A broad coalition government has implemented policies following the five priorities underpinning the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), leading to a 6.7% average annual growth rate in the GDP between 2003 and 2008. The country’s social situation however remains fragile, and poverty widespread. DRC is ranked 177 out of 179 countries in the 2006 Human Development Index, and the 2008 financial crisis has undoubtedly aggravated the situation. The large scale displacement, violence and human rights abuses experienced over decades of conflict have caused tremendous suffering and deterioration of the social fabric, overburdening or breaking up families and traditional social safety nets. Perhaps the most heart-rending manifestation of this social disruption is the growing number of street children in the country’s urban centers.

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1 The five priorities of DRC’s PRSP are: good governance and peace consolidation, consolidation of macro-economic stability and growth, access to social services, fight against HIV/AIDS, and promotion of community dynamics.
There are an estimated 40,000 street children in DRC, including about 14,000 in Kinshasa, though many development actors believe this is an underestimate. Because of the violence to which they are exposed on a daily basis and the lack of adult guidance, street children tend to live on the margins of society and engage in antisocial behavior, including substance abuse, crime, vandalism, prostitution and unsafe sex. Studies in Kinshasa report that nine out of ten street girls are involved in prostitution. These behaviors may have highly negative consequences for the children themselves (drug addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted early pregnancies, imprisonment) but also for society as a whole. In addition to the obvious security problem posed by street children, and the consequent loss of business or diminished quality of life for the general population, street children are unlikely to grow up into well adjusted and productive adults and may instead become easy prey for recruitment by urban gangs and militias. This can result in significant costs and large scale social capital erosion, including aggravating problems of insecurity and instability in many urban areas.

2. Objectives

The development objective of the project is to improve the delivery mechanisms of prevention and support services for street children in Kinshasa through (i) piloting alternative approaches, (ii) improving delivery capacity of service providers, and (iii) improving the institutional capacity of MINAS in coordination, supervision and strategic planning. The project will be implemented over 5 years.

The street children project contributes to three higher level objectives. First, it is fully consistent with the objectives of the PRSP, particularly two of its pillars: (i) Improving access to social services and reducing vulnerability, and (ii) promoting community dynamics. Second, it falls within the scope of four of the five specific objectives of DRC’s National Social Protection Strategy for Vulnerable Groups, including: (i) promoting the rights and the dignity of vulnerable groups (through prevention and sensitization); (ii) increasing access to basic social services; (iii) promoting and facilitating the economic and socio professional reinsertion of vulnerable groups; and (iv) building the capacity of key actors involved in the response. Last but not least the project would contribute towards building more cohesive communities and stronger solidarity (and therefore greater social capital), progress toward achieving a number of MDG (MDG no. 1, as assistance to street girls will help break the inter-generational cycle of poverty; MDG no.2 as street children will be given a chance to attend school; MDG no. 4 and 5, as street girls will receive peri-natal assistance), and a better organized and more competent Ministry of Social Affairs and National Solidarity.

3. Rationale for Bank Involvement

Progress toward peace and recovery in the DRC is taking place within the context of an acute social crisis, which constitutes a major risk for the country’s recovery. Partly in recognition of this risk, the Bank designed its strategy in the 2008-2011 CAS to focus its assistance around three pillars that include good governance, shared and sustainable growth, and improved social services. Projects and activities to be designed within the scope of the last two pillars, including the proposed street children project, will reduce vulnerability of marginalized populations, thus
supporting the social development priorities highlighted in the PRSP. The recent promulgation of a law for child protection creates a momentum while offering key opportunities to address this challenge. The proposed project activities address the recommendations of the Bank’s 2009 assessment of the street children actors and interventions in Kinshasa, including (a) the importance of focusing on prevention activities, (b) the need to improve coverage and services adapted to street children, and (c) and the need to strengthen the capacity of MINAS, so that it can become a more dynamic national focal point for child protection and mobilize more donor funds in the future.

The street children project is also an important element of Bank assistance to DRC in its transition from emergency to development. Street children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and also one of the poorest. The quality of urban living is greatly affected by street children, who are not only a sad reminder of society’s ills but also contribute to spread a sense of insecurity because of their frequent association with petty crimes and various forms of violence. The experience of metropolises in Latin America and other parts of the world makes it clear that unless action is taken at an early stage, street children may evolve into a (dysfunctional) society within society, with a considerable cost in terms of damage to property, loss of business, judiciary actions and health care. In addition, the delivery of quality, cost-effective and financially sustainable services to OVC is critical to the attainment of many of the MDGs

4. Description:

Project components were determined on the basis of lessons drawn from international experience, research recently conducted in DRC and extensive consultation with local actors including the local NGO network of street children and youth educators (REJEER), key international NGOs, government and UNICEF. The project will have the following three components:

**Component A: Prevention ($3.2 million).** This component aims at tackling the most common proximate causes of children being in the streets –family break-up and the subsequent abandonment, mistreatment or severe neglect of orphans and step-children; children being accused of witchcraft; lack of parental responsibility or simply ignorance of children’s needs and rights as stipulated in national legislations. Efforts will be concentrated on the four communes of the greater Kinshasa metropolitan area (out of 24) that are most often the point of origin for street children: Masina, Kimbanseke, Limete and Bumbu. Mutually reinforcing activities will be financed, including: (i) the establishment or strengthening of community based networks such as child protection committees and volunteer “Family helpers”; (ii) community awareness campaigns that will use social marketing principles to deliver basic messages; (iii) collaboration with religious establishments; (iv) support for school attendance and remedial education for at risk children; and (iv) media outreach.

**Component B: Assistance ($4.5 million).** This component will finance a set of activities aimed at improving coverage and quality of services for street children, including shelter, medical care, food, trauma counseling) to long-term living solutions (family reunification, group housing, formal and non formal education, vocational training, etc…). Specific attention will be provided to street girls based on the following considerations:

(a) Street girls often become pregnant and have babies, who will likely grow up in the street and become themselves street children. Assisting street girls, therefore, could help break...
the intergenerational cycle of “streetism” and, hopefully, also the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

(b) Street girls are often victims of sexual violence at the hand of various predators, including, in some cases, police officers or random men in the city who take advantage of them in exchange for protection or a place to sleep.

Also activities will be geographically targeted to eight of the 24 communes of the Kinshasa larger metropolitan area, selected for their high concentration of street children: Gombe, Kinshasa, Masina, Matete, Kasa-vubu, Kalamu, Kitambo and Selembao.

**Component C: Capacity building, coordination and project management ($2.3 million).** This component would provide for technical assistance and training to strengthen MINAS’ capacity to: (i) develop standards for activities targeting street children; (ii) coordinate the interventions of different stakeholders (NGOs, faith-based organizations, donors, government institutions); and (iii) monitor and evaluate ongoing interventions. When relevant, capacity building would include staff of other ministries (e.g., Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender, Family and Children) as well. In addition, the project will provide the opportunity to reinforce the capacity of entities with a direct role in the implementation of components A and B). As part of this component, an institutional assessment of MINAS will be conducted as it pertains to its capacity to achieve results in the field of child protection, so as to help the Ministry identify weaknesses and devise measures to make a more effective use of available resources.

**Financing**

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<th>Source:</th>
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<td>International Development Association (IDA)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
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</table>

5. Implementation

MINAS will be the implementing agency, but will rely on a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) placed within the Social Fund of the Republic of DRC (FSRDC) who has good knowledge of the Bank’s Financial management procedures to facilitate day-to-day management of the project. An MOU will spell out duties and responsibilities of the two parties. An Approval Committee, to be nominated by decree by the Ministry, will act as the oversight body.
Activities under Component A and B, as well as some of the activities under Component C, will be contracted to private actors (NGOs, faith-based organizations, consulting firms) and, when appropriate, to government entities. Selection will be done in line with Bank procedures, primarily on the basis of competitive bidding.

6. Sustainability

Project design will contribute to sustainability, in that it will (i) address the knowledge gap currently impeding effectiveness in service delivery to children; (ii) generate lessons learned for successful prevention activities; (iii) promote community ownership of the various interventions; (iv) build MINAS’ capacity to coordinate, supervise and monitor street children interventions more effectively and also to leverage funds from other donors; and (v) help establish and apply norms and standards for the sector. A large number of donors are involved in DRC and willing to invest resources towards addressing the street children problem. A body of knowledge about what works would greatly encourage contributions, and the involvement of the World Bank would act as a catalyst.

7. Lessons Learned from Past Operations in the Country/Sector

As the second and largest Bank’s operation designed to tackle the issue of street children in the AFR region, this grant provides various opportunities for learning. Unfortunately, considering that the other operation (a $2 million JSDF grant in Senegal) has just started implementation, it is impossible at this stage to reflect on past performance of similar Bank’s projects in the region. Similarly, lessons have yet to be drawn from the only other comparable project funded by the institution in recent years, the Bangladesh Disability and Children at Risk Project (P106332), which started implementation in January 2009 and has not yet undergone any formal evaluation process. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the plight of institutionalized children in the ex-Soviet bloc resulted in two projects that addressed street children issues to a certain extent: the Child Welfare Reform projects implemented in Bulgaria and Romania. While the context is considerably different from Kinshasa, the following lessons apply:

(i) Sustainability: It is important to secure buy-in from the Ministry of Finance early on, so as to motivate them to develop a financing formula for child protection services that can be adopted to ensure sustainability.

(ii) Prevention activities: Collaboration with strategic partners (including the media, UN agencies, and private organizations) is essential to the success of public awareness campaigns, especially when the project budget is limited. In addition, activities geared towards disseminating information on children rights, promoting law enforcement in that regards, and training as well as sensitizing law enforcement officers create an enabling environment for meeting project objectives.

Lessons from past operations targeting street children in other countries come primarily from Latin America, where formal efforts to deal with the problem date back to the 1980s with the
active involvement of the Inter-American Development Bank, but also from a number of African and Asian countries where NGOs have generally been at the forefront of efforts. Lessons include:

(i) the imperative of prevention for a long-term solution, with the most effective interventions targeting not children at risk of ending up in the street, but children from underprivileged backgrounds in general (e.g., early childhood development, conditional cash transfers, after school programs, etc.);

(ii) the need to focus “remedial” actions on mainstreaming children, thus avoiding institutional solutions and facilitating reintegration within the community;

(iii) caveats about family reunification, which is generally the preferred outcome but is an expensive and long endeavor with low success rates (recidivism is common and the longer the child has been in the street, the least likely the success);

(iv) the importance of vocational training, which organizations working with street children are seldom equipped to deliver in a competent way, i.e., in a way that actually results in the children being able to earn a living with the skills learned;

(v) the value of rigorous monitoring and evaluation, including follow-up of “graduated” children (either reunified with their family or otherwise reintegrated into mainstream society);

(vi) and the importance to encourage innovation, and to make space for risky projects with high potential benefits, but not weak implementing partners

Lessons learned from operations in DRC include the need to (i) have clearly defined selection criteria for NGOs working in Bank projects, (ii) have strong financial management and procurement capacity underpinning project activities, and (iii) establish clear monitoring and reporting requirements prior to project effectiveness.

8. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

This project has been rated as a Category C as no environmental impacts are expected from the implementation of project activities. Consequently, the project does not trigger any Bank safeguards as detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project</th>
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<td>Projects in Disputed Areas (OP/BP 7.60)*</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
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* By supporting the proposed project, the Bank does not intend to prejudice the final determination of the parties' claims on the disputed areas
9. List of Factual Technical Documents

- Ministères des Affaires Sociales, Action Humanitaire et Solidarité Nationale (MINAS), décembre 2009 : Project de décret portant règlementation de l’Action Sociale
- Ministères des Affaires Sociales, Action Humanitaire et Solidarité Nationale (MINAS), 2004: Stratégie nationale de protection sociales des groupes vulnérables

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