

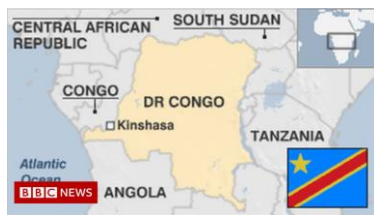
Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this twelfth week (April 1) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters and Associates ministering in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** as well as all of the people in that Central African nation.

The Sisters belong to two Congregations: Cuneo and San Giuseppe. The **Cuneo Congregation** operates twelve missions that support education, dispensaries, AIDS programs, orphanages, catechesis, agriculture, pastoral and parish work, retreats, hospitality to university students, empowerment of women, and schools for special needs student with hearing impairment. [This February \(2024\) article](#) by Sr. Justine Kapemb shared the joyous news of the establishment of a



newly-formed Little Design Community in the capital city of Kinshasa – see photo. In addition to the Cuneo Sisters, the **San Giuseppe Congregation** is present in fourteen communities as shared on their website:

“in schools for children and young people, in literacy centers for adults, small and large hospitals, maternity wards, nutritional centers for severely undernourished children, orphanages, shelters for street children, cutting and sewing workshops, cooperative agricultural activities in favor especially of widows, single mothers and young unschooled men and we always try to support and collaborate with the Parishes in which we are inserted for everything concerning the catechesis or the pastoral animation of the different groups that compose it.”



Country Background: As mentioned in last week’s prayer, there are two neighbouring African nations with the name ‘Congo’ - The Democratic Republic of the Congo (with Kinshasa as its capital) and the Republic of the Congo also called Congo-Brazzaville. Both countries gained independence in 1960 and have French as their official language; however, Congo-Brazzaville was colonized by France while the DRC was colonized by Belgium. Each country uses different national currencies.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo/DRC is the second-largest country on the African continent and covers a land area larger than the countries of Spain, France, Germany, Sweden, and Norway combined. The region was first settled around 90,000 years ago, and the Bantu peoples migrated into the area between the 5th and 10th centuries. In the 1870s, European exploration began and, in 1908, the country formally became the Belgian Congo. In 1960, it gained independence as the Republic of the Congo; however, following two coups during that decade it was renamed Zaire. By the early 1990s, destabilization in eastern Zaire as a result of the Rwandan genocide and disenfranchisement among the Congolese Tutsi led to the 1996 invasion led by Tutsi FPR-ruled Rwanda, which began the First Congo War. The Second Congo War involved nine African nations and resulted in the deaths of more than 5million people. Today, the DRC has a growing population of 104million (2024) and is the fourth-most populated

country in Africa. Economically, it is considered to be the richest country in the world in terms of its untapped mining reserves of copper, cobalt, gold, diamonds, coltan, zinc, tin, and tungsten. However, the lack of political stability and infrastructure, issues with corruption and centuries of both commercial and colonial extraction and exploitation, have resulted in limited development. As noted by [Human Rights Watch](#), the “situation across the DRC remains dire, with internal conflicts and poor governance contributing to a severe food crisis and the internal displacement of 5.8million people, more than anywhere else in Africa”. In 2024 the United Nations (Geneva) will be undertaking a review of the human rights situation in the DRC and our Sisters of St. Joseph UN-NGO is authoring a ‘shadow county report’ which will be submitted to the United Nations for consideration. (Sources: Al Jazeera news, CSJ International Centre website, CSJ UN-NGO, Cuneo Congregational website, Global Edge, Human Rights Watch, San Giuseppe Congregation website, Wikipedia, Worldometer)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 45 countries, listening to the heart of the world.