



Safe Access To Fuel and Energy (SAFE) Democratic Republic of Congo

Saving lives through SAFE cooking

WFP works to ensure that the food assistance provided can be consumed as safely and nutritiously as possible. While cooking may be thought of as a safe activity, in many circumstances, especially humanitarian settings, it poses serious health, safety and environmental risks. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), internally displaced populations are facing severe challenges related to the lack of access to cooking fuel. Most households depend largely on firewood and charcoal for domestic energy needs, including cooking.

FACTS DRC

- Insufficient cooking fuel to prepare food often leads to **households reducing their meals from three to one or none per day**.
- Most women cook using a **traditional three-stone fire**. When there is insufficient cooking fuel, people may use organic waste, plastic or garbage instead, **exposing themselves to toxic fumes and serious health hazards**.
- Firewood collection involves the risk of **gender-based violence and attack, especially against women and girls**.
- The densely populated eastern DRC is experiencing **increasing rates of deforestation and environmental degradation** due to slash-and-burn agriculture, fuelwood collection, charcoal production and brick-making.

Until 2015, DRC has supported 158,334 people through the SAFE initiative. WFP has globally reached over 6 million people with SAFE in 18 countries.

The challenge

More than two decades of armed conflict in DRC have left millions of people internally displaced. As charcoal is expensive and firewood increasingly scarce, lack of access to cooking fuel is threatening the safety, health and livelihoods of displaced populations.

Women and children are particularly affected, as they are often the ones responsible for collecting firewood and preparing meals for their families. During long collection trips, they are exposed to a high risk of sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, the trips take valuable time away from more productive pursuits such as education and income-generating activities.

Health and nutrition are also negatively affected by low or no access to cooking fuel as households may skip meals, undercook or sell food to buy fuel. Cooking with biomass fuel on open fire exposes women and children to higher risks of respiratory diseases and other health problems. Finally, competition for scarce resources is causing tensions between displaced and host communities.



Safe Access To Fuel and Energy (SAFE) DRC



Working on sustainable solutions

The **success of SAFE in DRC** relies on an innovative combination of energy-related and income-generating activities addressing various challenges linked to access to cooking fuel. These activities focus on nutrition, livelihoods, health, gender, environment and education.

SAFE in DRC

SAFE in DRC is a collaborative effort between WFP and its partners in Eastern DRC (South and North Kivu) with a focus on the following activities:

1. Provision and production training of **fuel-efficient metal- and clay stoves and fire-fuel briquettes** to households and IDP populations
2. Provision of **institutional stoves** to schools
3. **Awareness-raising and training** on protection and fuel-efficient cooking practices
4. **Afforestation and promotion of agroforestry** in two refugee camps (Lusenda and Rambira). These activities are meant to prevent natural disasters and increase access to firewood



Progress to date

- Distribution and use of briquettes and 6,510 fuel-efficient household stoves have decreased the duration and number of firewood collection trips, **reducing the associated exposure to gender-based violence risks as well as deforestation.**
- Women now make and sell their own clay stoves and briquettes, **increasing their households' overall income.**
- Training and awareness-raising sessions have **improved community-based protection strategies and natural resource management.**
- Distribution of 288 fuel-efficient institutional stoves have **reduced the cooking time of school meals and the pupils' and parents' burden of firewood collection**
- **800,000 trees have been planted over 626 hectares** in the Kalehe and Lusenda refugee camps between 2015-2017.

Future objectives DRC

In the coming years, SAFE in DRC aims to scale-up and promote the production and use of briquettes in vulnerable communities, continue the distribution and training on fuel-efficient institutional- and household stoves, and awareness and protection training in the territories of Fizi, Kabare, Kalehe, Mwenga, Shabunda and Walungu in DRC's South Kivu province.

With a budget of **USD 5,215,632** actively being sought, the SAFE programme will target 25,946 IDP and refugee households. Its objectives are women's empowerment through capacity building and income-generation opportunities, as well as sensitization on gender-based violence and environmental degradation.

WFP has globally committed to support 10 million people through SAFE activities by 2020.

A global survey conducted by WFP in 54 countries in 2015 highlighted that two thirds of these countries had energy-related concerns affecting people's food security, nutrition or safety. WFP has cookstove activities in 27 of its country offices.