

# Impact of social actions of Women in Republic of Congo from 1990 to 2019

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**Abstract:** The evolution of science and technology has truly brought about a significant revolution in everyday life. After the creation of the Organization of the United Nations in 1945, a true diplomatic career was put up in countries around the world trying to improve the conditions of life of women. Since then, the gender issue has preoccupied almost all the governments of the world. Women in the world in general and Congolese singularly are working more and more to integrate socially and to make their contribution. Congolese women exercise many activities from both their own initiatives and those of the government. These different activities contribute to the social development of the Republic of Congo. Women's social actions have a significant impact in the Republic of Congo and allow women to make so little contribution to the evolution of Congolese society

**Keywords:** Impact, social actions, women, development.

## Introduction

Since the Congo's independence, the Congolese woman has joined forces with the man to contribute to the development of the country. Representing more than half of the population, or 52 % [1], She is involved in the social life of the family and plays a decisive role in production, particularly in food security in both rural and urban areas. It was around the 1980s and 1990s that the department in charge of the advancement of women and the integration of women in development through its theory of approach: " Integration of women in development " directs it towards the promotion of activities in favor of women, a methodology to integrate the concerns of women in the projects of the technical structures of the State. Understood as a key player and regulator of development. This development concept is complex insofar as it acquires several meanings, depending on whether one is in economics, sociology and psychology or in such or such other discipline of the human sciences.

On the social level, Congolese women exercise many activities linked to their own initiative or to collective action, these different activities contribute to the social development of the Republic of Congo. This article main goal is to show the impact social actions of women in the Republic of Congo from 1990 to 2019.

## I. Congolese women and the social well-being of individuals

In order to improve the living conditions of the Congolese population, many Congolese have preferred to work in sectors such as education, health, justice, the environment and tourism.

### 1. Congolese women in education

In the field of education, the contribution of Congolese women is fundamental. The woman is the image and the guarantor of education in a society. She intervenes in all plans and levels of education: basic education, supervision, initiation, teaching and training of the individual.

The Congolese woman is the first educator and advisor of her society because she sets the educational milestones and brings the first knowledge that forms the personality of the individual. Indeed, she educates, advises and "discipline" not only her family, but also her husband, hence the slogan: «*Behind a great man always hides a great lady* ". On this subject, Likambo quoted by Daniele Sassou N' Guesso maintains that:

*For me, housewives are mothers! We replace the mothers, the sisters of our spouses. So the woman has all the roles in the house. When the husband is absent, it is the wife who does everything, whether it is to make decisions concerning the children or everything concerning the house. She helps children in learning lessons, in their exercises.*[2]

Congolese women provide supervision and training for those around them (neighborhood, service, Church, etc.). Being endowed with wisdom, Congolese women self-educate and self-supervise through the organization of education and training days. They participate in social conferences. In churches too, pastors and priests rely on the contribution of women (regardless of age) in the context of evangelization. Furthermore, at the different levels of education (pre-school, primary, secondary and higher), women have great responsibilities [3].

## **2. Women in health**

In Congo, women are not only confined to procreation but they also fight to maintain human health and save the lives of individuals in medical centers across the country.

They are trained in various branches of medicine. There are also several female associate professors, doctors, majors, midwives, nurses, pediatricians (see image n ° 1) working in many health facilities in the country.

All these women give the best of themselves to fight against certain infections, epidemic, endemic and pandemic diseases, by treating and raising awareness in the towns and villages of the Congo.

Other women, who do not practice medicine, organize themselves around charitable associations and NGOs to provide support (training, funding, medicines, equipment, food, etc.) to nursing staff and the sick. This is the case of Mrs. Antoinette Sassou N'Guesso, president of the Association Congo Assistance [4] who was honored, on May 20, 2019, by the WHO, for the efforts made by her NGO in " the fight against sickle cell disease and other diseases in the WHO African region " [5].

## **3. The woman in the environmental management**

In Congo, the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism is headed by a woman, like Arlette Soudan Nonault [6]. Under her leadership, there are also many Congolese women occupying high positions (directors, inspectors) and many others (secretaries, agents, etc.).

Indeed, the environment is the set of natural and artificial elements (plants, animals, buildings, bodies of water) that surround human beings. It is essential to survival, because the population in needs to breathe, drink and eat. [7] Whether in urban or rural areas, Congolese women are the guarantors of their cleanliness, even their balance.

The Congolese ensure the proper maintenance of their home (home and place of service). Indeed, every day, they clean up their house and their yard, do the dishes and also the laundry for the whole family. They fight against excessive pollution of their living environment; by sweeping, disinfecting, and purifying the gutters.

The capital city, Brazzaville was once sanitized by the company Pro-Brazza ; nowadays, it is supported by Averda . In these companies, some Congolese women work as administrators, economists and controller-supervisors; others, on the other hand, are sanitation agents.

They participate in initiatives related to the environment and climate change. These women give their opinions when taking decisions on the implementation of policies for the conservation of nature, the maintenance of livelihoods and the fight against natural disasters, in particular floods, erosions, fires and landslides ground. By way of illustration, on November 06 of each year (National Tree Day), they take part in conferences such as those in Rio and Copenhagen. They also practice reforestation, planting trees, grasses and lawns to fight against erosion.

As for tourism, nowadays, it is transforming and becoming a commercial industry designed and sold by travel, advertising, accommodation and catering agencies.

In this area, Congolese women are very active there. They attract tourists and their guides to the sites visited.

Finally, apart from their participation in the political life of the country, Congolese women occupy more strategic positions in sectors such as the public service, unions and the private sector.

## **4. The Congolese women at justice**

Altruistic and supportive by nature, the Congolese woman is also present in the workings of justice in the Congo. At this level, several women practice and enforce the law.

In fact, throughout the national territory, in the courts and certain police stations and at the gendarmerie, there are women who settle many disputes. Some defend the interests of individuals, others secure the property and property of the State, local communities and private individuals. Thus, there are among these women magistrates, judges, bailiffs, lawyers, notaries, judicial police officers, etc.

## II. The participation of Congolese women in the development and management of society

For many reasons, including poverty, the search for a livelihood and their integration into modern society, as well as for the development of their society, some Congolese women work in the public service and sometimes hold political offices.

### 1. Congolese women in the enlargement and taking charge of society

Women are the foundation of all societies in the world thanks to their ability to procreate. In Congo, it is both the basis for the consolidation of the family fabric and the force for enlarging society. She also takes charge of society, thanks to her virtues which take precedence over she vices in relation to man. This is how Elembe Hélène declares:

*These are the women who hold all Congolese society, from where the different presidents who have succeeded each other at the head of the Republic have always entrusted the Congo into the hands of a woman.*[\[8\]](#)

This idea is illustrated by the image below which represents one of the seals of the coat of arms of the Republic.

Indeed, the Congolese woman promotes demographic growth in the cities and in the countryside of the country by procreating. She educates the children, future managers and workforce of tomorrow. She fights for the well-being of society. This idea goes in the same direction as that of Daniele Sassou N' Guesso who wrote:

*If some women consider that their fundamental social role is primarily in the domestic space, they still consider work (in the public space) as an essential asset for married life. In fact, thanks to their jobs and the income she generates, they can better take on their own tasks in the private sector. The work gives them access to a certain financial autonomy which allows them to assume, if necessary, the expenses of health, education or training of the members of their household. Work therefore represents, for many women, a means of increasing their contribution within the home (and their society), which can greatly improve their image with their spouses (and those around them).*[\[9\]](#)

Congolese women use appropriate means to ensure food and food security for their families and in their society. It is in this sense that the MPFIFD stipulates:

*Congolese women suffer today to feed their households as it should because of the rise in food prices due to reasons that are not always explained to them by the public authorities and the difficulty of access to water and electrical energy which does not facilitate cooking. In addition, households headed by women suffer more from rising food prices than those headed by men because of insufficient resources. Women ensure that each family member receives a sufficient share of the food they are responsible for providing by devoting their time and income to this mission. They are also the ones who decide how to prepare food and must ensure that their families benefit from the products they grow, buy and prepare themselves.*[\[10\]](#)

Finally, women are primarily responsible for providing household and water supplies for cooking and heating as well as food security.

### 2. Congolese women in administration

Congolese women also contribute to the proper functioning of the administration in Congo. Indeed, some Congolese women exercise the functions of minister, director, inspector, secretary and others. These work for the good management of structures, business and public services of the State, local communities.

As examples, we can cite women ministers like Adélaïde MOUNGANI, Rosalie KAMA NIAMAYOYA, Rosalie MATONDO, Emilienne RAOUL, Arlette SOUDAN NONAULT, Destine ERMELLA DOUKAGA, Ines NEFER INGANI,

Claudine Mounari . There are also many women parliamentarians including Mountou Bayonne (senator); Claudia Sassou N 'Gusso , Charlotte Opimba (deputies) [11]. There are also women prefects and mayors. Many Congolese women also serve as administrators in the private and international sectors. Although some occupy high positions (presidents, vice-presidents, directors, or assistant directors, inspectors, coordinators), most of them occupy positions of subordinates compared to men. All these women give their all to not only hold their jobs and change their administrative structure, but also to show that the Congolese women can do better than men [12].

Whether at the national or international level, these different administrators work ardently for the well-being and development of their homeland, as well as to maintain the visibility and sovereignty of the country on an international scale.

### 3. The involvement of women in the political life of Congo

Table 4: The representation of women in decision-making bodies in some important institutions (until October 2016)

No.	institutions	Effective	Men	Women	%
1	Government	38	32	8	21%
2	Senate	72	58	14	19.4%
3	National Assembly	136	126	10	7.3%
5	Constitutional Court	9	7	2	22%
6	Elected to departmental and municipal councils	860	738	122	14.1%
7	Presidents of departmental and municipal councils	16	14	2	12.5%
8	Borough mayors	23	18	5	21.7%
9	Mayors of urban communities	56	40	16	
10	Secretaries General of Urban Communities	56		13	15.7%
11	prefects	12	12	0	0%
12	Court of Audit	19	16	3	15.7%
13	clerks	21	12	9	16.66

Source : MPFIFD

Table 5 : Representation of women in ministerial structures

Position held	Total	Women	% Women
director	557	83	14.9
advisor	217	20	9.2
Private secretary / chief executive officer	192	142	73.9
Attaché / Chief of Protocol	298	54	18.1
<b>Total</b>	1486	323	21.7

Source: General Secretariat of the government and concerned services, September 2013 [13]

Tables 4 and 5 show that women are poorly represented in political life in the Congo. Despite this observation, Congolese women participate and play a significant role in the organization and operation of state affairs.

Some Congolese women participate in the country's political decision-making. The latter do participate in the legislative process, but in a marginal way. They are present in the two (02) chambers of Parliament (National Assembly and Senate). They also constitute a very important electoral body during the various votes which take place in the country. Speaking of women sitting in Parliament, they validly plead and defend the rights and interests of the Republic in general, but those of their constituents in particular. These parliamentarians also make multifaceted donations (construction of water wells, distribution of food, etc.) to the population of their constituency. They participate in political debates and create parties which they lead. As such, Félie Addley M 'fina specifies :

*However, some women have distinguished themselves by their courage and political commitment by creating political parties that they have led. This is the case of*

*Mrs. Angèle Bandou (deceased), president of the African Party of the Poor (PAP) created in 1992. She was a candidate in the presidential elections of 1992 and 2002. Mrs. Yvonne Qoéleth Ngolo Lembé , president of the Republican Party for Peace, Congo Education and Development (PRPEDC) created in 2005. Mrs. Claudine Munari , president of the Movement for Unity, Solidarity and Work (MUST) created in 2007.* [14]

As voters, Congolese women are a force sought by political parties during the various elections (presidential, legislative and senatorial). They are part of the executive power, precisely in the government where they hold the office of minister. They also present themselves in embassies (ambassadors, consultants) and local communities (mayors, prefects, councilors, etc.). Currently, there are eight (08) women ministers. [15]

This is what the MPFIFD report relates:

*The representation of women in the current government has exceptionally reached 20% since, for the first time, the government implemented in June 2016 included eight women among 38 ministers. Local media spoke of it as "a record" and "a first". However, efforts remain to be made. To reach the target of at least 30%, 12 ministerial positions must be occupied by women.* [16]

These women manage the country by executing and enforcing the laws and programs decided by parliament and the executive.

They are also very active in the judiciary, although it is "A fundamentally male judicial institution which only grants labor courts to women". [17]

Congolese women are also carriers of peace in the Congo. In reality, faced with the various civil conflicts in the country, the voice of Congolese women is always raised to attract the attention of national and international opinion, implementing several strategies to bring back and maintain peace. Among these strategies, the Congolese women proceed by declarations, arrests, calls, press points, meetings, marches, tribunals, cults, radio and television messages, publications, correspondence, conferences and seminars, etc. To illustrate these remarks, during the national forum of women of Congo held from July 28 to 31, 2010 in Brazzaville, Clementine Portella Makani specified:

*On December 22, 1993 braving all the forces, they (more than 10,000 women) organized a march through the streets of the capital city to the presidential palace for the delivery of a message of peace where the women said, on their knees «Never again !" »(...). The correspondence was addressed to important and influential African personalities among which we can quote : Nelson Mandela, to the Presidents : Omar Bongo, Abdou Diouf, Amani Toumani Toure (1997) and to the ambassadors accredited in our country as well as the Secretary General of the OUA* [18].

In the same vein, Maixent Itoua adds:

*Organized within several associations, NGOs, networks and religious denominations, the women have courageously carried out multiple actions in the field which have translated a change in customs and an awareness of their role, in particular: the questioning of the protagonists of the parties belligerent; marches and religious worship; the organization and / or participation in conferences and seminars ; negotiations and advocacy with political leaders ; awareness campaigns.* [19]

Congolese women are the guarantors of national unity in the Congo. They fight not only against the external forces which covet their territory, but also against their fellow citizens who quarrel and aim at tearing apart the national fabric. It is in this context that Maixent Itoua wrote :

*Congolese women have multiplied contacts far from media fires. All this to avoid the " Balkanization " of the country. Efforts, laudable and infinitely priceless sacrifices of which history will be able to give an account in the form of testimony. [20]*

He goes further :

*All these anonymous women who rose inside the country as at the center of their own parties, sometimes to avoid their break-up, sometimes to defend life, thus " dissociating " themselves from their staffs which were fending weapons against their brothers and sisters, at the risk of their own lives, are innumerable. The case of Jacqueline Mamoni is an illustration of this. This lady had to face the good number of dignitaries of the region of Bouenza... indeed, she had to fight against those who envisaged a separation of the territory ; separatist ideas " the divisionists " of national unity in the department of Bouenza in rebellion and thereby waged on several fronts the fight against tribalism and regionalism so that the Congo remains one and indivisible. [21]*

Likewise, the President of the Republic, Denis Sassou N ' Guesso , recognized and praised the contribution of Congolese women in maintaining peace and national unity in the Congo. He mentioned it in his message to the women gathered in Parliament at the forum on the role and place of women in Congolese society, marking the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the country's independence. He said :

*(...) What you have done for peace in this country, by reconciling the most irreducible views, by putting yourself through the adversity and barbarity of men, by sharing a smile and solidarity in inhospitable regions , we dare to believe that you will be able to do it for the development of our country (...)[22].*

Finally, we can say that Congolese women play a very crucial role in the political life of their country.

#### **4. Congolese women in solving certain social problems**

From the point of view of social security, Congolese women are carriers of peace, order and family and / or national unity thanks to their advice, ideas and actions. Indeed, Congolese women watch over their family and their neighborhood; they settle disputes and teach love in order to foster a good climate and good neighborliness. For example, by their advice, behavior, and reasoning, some women reconcile their husbands with their parents, they prevent many families to tear apart, especially on questions of inheritance, care. They cover the vices (egoism, irresponsibility...) of their husband in front of their family. Others reconcile the divided or former enemies, bringing them together. This is observed in neighborhoods and professional circles [23].

Faced with the prostitution of girls and the *Koulouna* phenomenon practiced by certain boys, many Congolese women are involved in stemming these social phenomena which disturb public order and indignantly Congolese society.

In addition, there are many female gendarmes, police officers, sailors and soldiers of all ranks who work in the various structures (directorates, intendances, police stations) of the Congolese armed forces to maintain and safeguard national peace and security.[24]

Within the framework of the social well-being of the Congolese, peasant women work ardently by producing foodstuffs, on the other hand intellectuals participate in trade union meetings, integrate NGOs and socio-cultural associations and "tontines", in view fight against poverty and misery, malnutrition, diseases, food security and self-sufficiency. This is the case of Azur Development which fights to «reduce the vulnerability of women and girls by promoting their rights, preventing early, unwanted pregnancies, HIV and economic empowerment ". Congolese women fight for the workers' cause and campaign for the integration and well-being of the individual in Congolese society. To this end, during their first citizen meeting with their deputy, the women of the third electoral district of Makelekele“took the opportunity to present the general situation of their constituency marked by the problems of insecurity, unemployment, recurrent cuts in water and electricity, high property tax prices, absenteeism from doctors in public hospitals, anti-values as well as road degradation”[25].

Finally, the Congolese woman is the force of social cohesion, and guardian of community ties [26]. The tables below present some NGOs and socio-cultural associations led by Congolese women who help improve the living conditions of the Congolese.

**Table N ° 6: Some NGOs and women's associations in the Congo**

Nomination	Management
Association Congo assistance	Antoinette Sassou N ' Guesso
Mibeko Association	Rebecca QuonieBowao
Salvation Army Home League	Bamanabio Brigitte
Yambanga orphanage	Berthe Christine Beto[27]
Orphanage Saint Joseph de Gaston-Céleste	Célestine Madzoumou[28]
Azur Development	Sylvie Niombo
Association Women for the Development of Bouenza	Sylvie Niombo
Moko Mothers Association	ElphieSchellaTsana
Congolese Association for Combating Violence against Women and Girls	Micheline Ngoulou
Club of Women Painters and Sculptors Artists.	Soblog e Mbilapassi Florence

Source : Oba Dominiq ue, 2019 survey

These various organizations mentioned above contribute to the well-being of the entire Congolese population regardless of age, sex, origin, etc.

### Conclusion

Congolese women have continued to contribute to the social development of the Congo Republic. Unfortunately, her integration and empowerment in the various development institutions of the Republic are recent, this following several national, regional and international struggles. These various struggles, started since 1945, led to the creation of a ministry dedicated to women in 2005. Now, women participate in various activities that were once male and also contribute to the development of their country. They contribute to the well-being of individuals and to the management of the country, as well as to its social and economic development.

### Acknowledgments

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#### Footnotes

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