

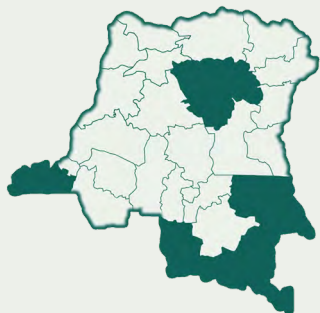
CONGO RIVER SCHOOL TRAINING: RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Training Evaluation Report Summary

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is rich in critical minerals and natural resources. While communities there often have the will to resist destructive development, they sometimes don't know where to start. In August 2023, 24 activists gathered in Lubumbashi, DRC for the first convening of the Congo River School, hosted by EarthRights International and AfreWatch. Participants there gained critical skills for protecting their communities and resources. Here are some preliminary findings:

The training aimed to:

1. Equip activists in the DRC with foundational documentation skills and introduce essential campaign building principles.
2. Foster networking and advanced training opportunities for African alumni of EarthRights' global training programs.
3. Establish a network of environmental and human rights activists within the DRC and across Africa.



Map of the DRC with provinces highlighting the communities of the trainees.

KEY FINDINGS

Trainees were primarily interested in developing their capacities for documenting environmental and human rights abuses and using advocacy to help their communities.

Trainees participated because they felt a deep commitment to learning more about methods for documenting environmental and human rights abuse and how to use these methods to advocate for their communities. Widespread pollution, dust and acidified water, and degradation of soil, air, and water were some of the primary environmental issues experienced by participating communities. These issues, combined with human rights abuses, arrests, and labor and workplace violations, affect the ability of individuals and communities to advocate for their rights against corporations that contribute to these violations.

Participants arrived with some knowledge of laws, community rights, the stages of an advocacy campaign, and how documentation can support advocacy. The average pre-training survey score for perceived levels in these domains was between 3.1 and 4.2 (from a range of 1-5, where 1 is the lowest). Trainees expressed an interest and need to learn more about how to document environmental and human rights abuses. Consistent with qualitative data, the average pre-training survey scores on perceived level of knowledge of documentation techniques ranged from 1.7 (knowledge of air and soil collection) to 2.7 (knowledge of interviews). The average score for knowledge of photo documentation was 2.2 (where 1 is the lowest – “no knowledge” and 5 is the highest – “a lot of knowledge”).

The training met the expectations of all trainees.

All the trainees felt that the training provided them with the knowledge and skills they hoped to improve on. One of the primary areas of focus for the training was on methods for documenting environmental and human rights abuses. Specifically, the training delved into three specific methods for documenting environmental and human rights – photo documentation, air and soil collection, and interviews.

“I am delighted because everything I have learned here will not stay with me alone. I will also share it with my community so that my community knows what our rights are.”

-Méda Masengo Banza, Lubumbashi

Most trainees felt that their knowledge improved in using three methods for documenting environmental and human rights violations, advocacy, and the laws that affect their rights.

Most trainees felt that their knowledge and confidence improved on the methods taught during the training. Some 92% of trainees felt that their knowledge had improved and 67% felt that their confidence had improved in the use of photo documentation methods. More than half showed improvement in their understanding of how to use photo documentation in advocacy campaigns. Furthermore, 81% of trainees surveyed also indicated that their knowledge in the use of air and soil collection to document environmental rights violations had improved. Overall, trainees felt the most improvement in their knowledge of this method. Lastly, some (67%) participants surveyed felt that their knowledge of the use of interviews for documenting rights abuses had improved as well.



Trainees conduct an interview and practice photo and video documentation skills during a field trip to communities in Kolwezi affected by cobalt mining.

While most trainees felt that they were knowledgeable of laws affecting their rights and the stages of advocacy campaigns, more than half of the trainees felt that their knowledge improved in these areas. At the start of the training, 40% of the trainees felt that they were knowledgeable about the relevant laws that affect environmental and human rights, and close to half of the trainees felt that they were aware of the stages for advocacy campaigns. At the end of the training, more than half of the trainees felt that their knowledge improved in these two areas – 52% on the stages of advocacy campaigns and 57% on knowledge of laws, respectively.

Trainees intend to use and share what they have learned, but they will need continued support.

Trainees indicated a strong interest in utilizing what they learned in the training and drafted Action Plans to describe efforts that they would spearhead. These Action Plans identified objectives, key activities, and budgets that trainees will use to guide their outreach and training efforts. Through discussions facilitated during the training, participants realized the value of continued collaboration and knowledge-sharing among themselves and the communities they represent. Many participants indicated their interest in collaborating with trainers and coordinators as well. Multiple trainees cited the teaching and coaching they received from African participants in EarthRights' Global School as important in connecting issues within the DRC to broader community challenges across Africa.

While the training was effective in addressing their needs, participants acknowledged the need to deepen their understanding of other techniques and knowledge areas. The action plans also indicate the need for ongoing technical advice and financial support.

"I am very pleased with the organization of the training session at the École du Fleuve Congo, and we hope that such sessions can continue to be organized so that we can acquire tools and knowledge that will enable us to confront the realities of our societies."

-Nathan Nkulu Kiluba, Kolwezi

In training and supporting 24 individuals, EarthRights and AfreWatch will help realize Action Plans where:

17

Communities affected by air, soil, and water pollution receive support from trainees of the Congo River School.

12

Communities learn crucial information about environmental conditions that affect their health and well-being.

5

Communities will receive training on how to conduct air, soil, and water assessments.

2

Communities affected by water pollution will be highlighted in an advocacy campaign.