UNIT ENQUIRY – What most limits Sub-Saharan Africa's development?

Lesson 1 – What is sub-Saharan Africa Like?

1. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) stretches across the continent from the Sahel (just below the Sahara Desert) all the way down to the southern tip of South Africa.
2. Home to 1 billion people (16% of Earth), the population will double by 2050, featuring the world's youngest population (70% under 30 vs 30% in Europe), but 67% survive on just $2.15 a day.
3. The region contains extreme environments like the Congo River Basin and the Kalahari Desert, alongside the second-largest tropical rainforest on Earth.
4. Challenges include disease, corruption, war, cities growing too fast, a lack of food and water, and fighting for the fair treatment of women.
5. DRC has a GDP per capita of just $700 compared to $5,000 in South Africa. Whilst life expectancy is similar peace and corruption index scores are much lower in the DRC than South Africa.

Lesson 2 – How has Colonialism Influenced Sub Sharan Africa?

1. Europeans colonised Africa from 1400 by boat with significant physical geographical barriers preventing inland exploration like the Sahara and the Congo River rapids. The Dutch and English took South Africa and Belgium, capturing the DRC.
2. Slave trade exploited people in Western Africa between 1600-1800
3. Whilst slavery stopped, exploitation of minerals such as gold and diamonds continued due to the military might of colonial powers.
4. The Scramble for Africa ensued with the Berlin Conference in 1854 dividing up the continent between European Powers with just two countries remaining independent.
5. Many of the DRC issues can be traced back to its colonial routes.

Lesson 3 – How can Premature Deaths in Sub Saharan Africa be Reduced?

1. Major causes of premature death are newborn health issues (neonatal disorders), alongside tropical diseases like malaria, HIV, and diarrhoea.
2. Around 7.8 million people live with HIV in South Africa; even with good drug treatments, AIDS-related illnesses still claim 50,000 lives each year.
3. Big improvements are happening, as HIV deaths in South Africa dropped by over 54% since 2010.
4. In the DRC accessing healthcare is hard because there is no National Health Service (NHS), medical staff and medical equipment are scarce, and high school/work absence (absenteeism) hurts the economy.
5. Some of the issues can be linked to the colonial legacy and ongoing fighting.

Lesson 4 – How should Mining be improved in the DRC?

1. The DRC is a natural resource superpower with an estimated $24 trillion worth. The DRC minerals are dominated by copper and cobalt. There is a huge global demand for Cobalt as it is a core component in lithium batteries.
2. The key to improving quality of life for people in SSA is to use the potential wealth from natural resources to improve infrastructure and achieve greater equality.
3. Geologically, the DRC's minerals are much easier to physically extract, but politically and logistically, they are incredibly difficult to bring to market. Conversely, South Africa's minerals are a nightmare to physically extract due to extreme depths, but the country possesses the world-class infrastructure and legal security needed to access global markets easily
4. DRC is prevented from realising the wealth from resources due to conflict, corruption, unregulated mining, and a lack of processing infrastructure so only raw materials with lower profit margins (compared to processed) are exported.
5. Corruption is widespread and exploitation of workers including children in artisan mines (informal), where most of the workforce operate, is widespread.

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Lesson 5 – What is the DRC's Colonial Legacy?

1. European rulers enslaved people and stole Congo's natural riches; King Leopold II used cruel "human zoos" to justify his rule, leaving a legacy of weak government.
2. Colonial powers divided the population to control them easier, erasing local history, traditions, and religions through forced re-education.
3. When Belgium left in 1960, the nation collapsed into army mutinies; they left behind 0 local doctors, lawyers, or engineers, and locals held just 3 out of 5,000 government jobs.
4. Triggered by the Rwandan genocide in the late 1990s, this rebellion quickly became "Africa's World War" as surrounding countries fought to steal DRC's rich minerals. The war led to the millions of deaths, refugees and the destruction of the country's infrastructure

Lesson 6 – How has South Africa Overcome Conflict?

1. South Africa was once a very divided country and whilst it still has problems there have been significant improvements and all-out war was avoided.
2. South Africa was originally colonised by the Dutch but the British took control when they defeated the Dutch in the Boer War. Following independence from Britain the Dutch or Afrikaans seized power and installed Apartheid.
3. Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa enforced by the government from 1948 until the early 1990s. It stripped the non-white majority of their citizenship, restricted their movements through laws, and forced them into impoverished "homelands" to maintain white minority rule.
4. White minority made of Afrikaans and English held all political power and the best economic opportunities.
5. South Africa overcame apartheid through protest, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), allowing perpetrators and victims to confront the atrocities of the past and international economic sanctions.
6. The DRC could adapt this model to address the grievances of its displaced populations and hold human rights violators accountable to the atrocities of the war.

Lesson 7 – How should the DRC Improve Trade?

1. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to the most landlocked countries globally. The DRC is effectively landlocked due to no deepwater seaport due to the strength of currents in the Congo River.
2. Despite supplying critical minerals for the global green energy transition, two-thirds of Congolese citizens live below the poverty line. The DRC largely exports raw materials. They need to process the raw materials and sell more sophisticated products.
3. The DRC's trade is dominated by China (70% exports and 28% imports) and as a result is heavily influenced by them having more trading partners would provide more stability.
4. DRC is reliant on exports of a few raw materials such as Cobalt and Copper. They are therefore very exposed to fluctuations in market price. If trade was diversified it would be less of an issue.
5. Mining is dominated by artisan mines (illegal) which are part of the informal economy so don't generate taxes. Most legal mines are run by Multinational firms and profits often leak out of the country.
6. Infrastructure is weak, a very small undeveloped road network which makes exporting and importing goods difficult.