Democratic Republic of the Congo: The non-governmental organization (NGO) Volunteers United in Action for Progress and Development (Volontaires unis dans l'action pour le progrès et le développement, VUAPROD); its founding date; its organizational structure; the number of members; its mandate and activities; the treatment of its members by the authorities

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (Centre technique de coopération agricole et rurale, CTA), established in 1983 following the Lomé Convention between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union Member States (CTA n.d.b), provides the following information on VUAPROD:

[Translation]

Volunteers United in Action for Progress and Development (Volontaires unis dans l'action pour le progrès et le développement, VUAPROD) is an NGO that was established in 1980 to revitalize and promote disadvantaged rural and urban areas. Its activities focus on the areas of agriculture, livestock, health, the environment, training, and development research. VUAPROD was originally an initiative led by Zaireans who wanted to participate in the country's development in an effective way. Today, this organization has more than a thousand volunteers throughout the country. They work together to improve the standard of living of farmers, to make the methods and tools used to promote agriculture more easily understandable, to implement tangible projects, and to promote the exchange of information and experience with other development NGOs. (CTA n.d.a)

In contrast, a directory of youth associations published by the International Organization of the Francophonie (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, OIF) indicates that VUAPROD stands for University Volunteers United in Action for Rights and Development (Volontaires universitaires unis dans l'action pour les droits et le développement) (OIF n.d.). According to the OIF, VUAPROD was founded on 3 October 1992 by a group of university students in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and its policy sectors are the environment, education and youth (ibid.). The OIF also notes that VUAPROD is an organization [translation] "recognized by the department responsible for youth following its official registration by the Ministry of the Interior (ministère de l'Intérieur)" (ibid.). The OIF mentions that VUAPROD has a president and a leader of the youth section, who is also responsible for training (ibid.). In addition, the OIF notes that members of VUAPROD led awareness campaigns against excessive logging, which caused them to create committees
focusing on forest and water ecosystems defence (ibid.).

In a 24 April 2009 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a VUAPROD representative stated that the VUAPROD organization found in the OIF directory is VUAPROD's youth section, which was created and affiliated to the OIF in 1992. The Representative added that as a result of the positions they take on certain government policies, members of VUAPROD are often victims of intimidation campaigns led by the authorities, which can force them to live in hiding or to leave the country (VUAPROD 24 Apr. 2009). He stated that these campaigns are characterized by repeated attacks on VUAPROD offices, death-threat letters, and arbitrary arrests and imprisonment (ibid.). Corroborating information to that provided by the VUAPROD Representative could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Alliance pour un monde responsable; Bibliothèque pour le développement durable et les besoins humains essentiels; Conférence de Bruxelles sur la gestion durable des forêts en République démocratique du Congo.

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