

## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MINING CHILDREN'S SITUATION IN KALEHE AND MWENGA TERRITORIES IN SOUTH KIVU - THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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**ABSTRACT:** This piece of work is concerned with the critical analysis of mining children's situation in Kalehe and Mwenga territories in South Kivu-the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have gathered data for this piece of work in mining sites of Kalehe and Mwenga thanks to direct interviews, observations, and focus groups. This paper aims at showing to any reader or researcher how the children rights are not respected by people in mining sites of South Kivu because children are used as an affordable labor force. We want anyone who may have the possibilities of making just a step to use the result of this research in order to withdraw mining children in those bad conditions that they are living in. After the analysis of the data, we have found out that children are completely ii-treated in all mining sites because of hard jobs that they daily fulfill. They constitute an affordable labor force. Their children's rights are not respected by adult due to selfish interests. Poverty and hardship in their families are the basic reasons which push parents to send children in mining sites because they should contribute to the income of the family.

**KEYWORDS:** child, ore, labor force, poverty, exploitation, interest.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Repeated wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo have highly contributed to human right violence in general and particularly to children's right violence. Many of them have been used as war children, sexual slaves, and other civilian populations have been using them as a labor force. Mention should be made of mining activities in forests and villages of South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The democratic Republic of Congo is one of African developing countries where people live under one dollar per day. Many children do not go to school especially in villages where the rate of poverty is high as it is the case of the majority of all developing countries. The case of the DRC is a bit complex. From the 90's until this very moment on which I am writing this piece of work, Congolese parents pay the school fees for their children. The government pays an insufficient salary to teachers until every school establishes every year a given amount that should be paid by parents to increase the income of teachers. This situation has pushed many children to leave schools especially girls whose academic education is still neglected by many fathers who think that girls are only good for household activities and marriage. Though this behavior is disappearing there are still victims of academic education discrimination in the DRC. Nongovernmental organizations play a great role in sensitizing parents about giving children the same chance in matter of education. In such a context children are likely to fall into the traps of adults who use them for their own selfish interests. According to the International Labor Organization, an estimated number of 115 million children from 5 to 17 years old work in hazardous conditions across the world. Hazardous child labor is classed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as one of the worst forms of child labor. The International Labor Organization describes it as "work in dangerous or unhealthy

conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured and/or made ill as a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working arrangements”.

As it is the case of all rebels, children are enrolled in armed groups as they do not have time of thinking before reacting. The majority of children join armed groups after being kidnapped. The different armed groups in the DRC always misbehave by using children as a labor force especially as fire wood collectors, mining children, sexual slaves, and combatants.

## **1.2 THE PROBLEM**

The school and the family are the best places for children's welfare. Using children as a labor force is a violation against them. The blooming of children depends on the environment upon which they live in. In most villages of South Kivu where mining sites are reported children are living in bad conditions. Parents do not take care of their children. They spend much of their timing in ore searching and forget about their children's right. Classrooms are empty while mining sites are full of children who are used as labor force for different issues. Women who work in mining sites ask their young daughters to leave school to keep babies whether at home or directly in mining sites. Children from armed groups do not go back to schools but prefer going to mining sites as nobody takes care of them because of poverty.

When I consider the above issues, it is possible to put the following questions:

- Does poverty push parents to forget about their children's rights?
- What are the reasons which push children to work in mining sites?
- Are children aware of their rights when doing difficult jobs in mining sites?

## **1.3 HYPOTHESIS**

I consider the following hypothesis for this piece of work:

- Children could not be used in South Kivu mining sites if their parents were able to pay the school fees for them.
- The ignorance and poverty are supposed to be the main reasons which push adults to use children in mining sites.
- Children would claim for their rights if they were aware of it and stop working in mining sites.

## **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DURATION**

In order to collect the data for this paper we have used different methodologies and techniques but mostly descriptions, observations, and interviews. We have read some literature related to children's right just to inspire ourselves. The description approach was used to describe the different events that we have come across during the research. We have made observations when we were in contact with the communities which live in the regions of the mining sites to complete the data that we have collected from interviews. For the interview we were whether in direct contact with concerned children or their parents. Local leaders helped us in having access to mining sites. Sometimes we could join a group of mineral sellers and fake as one of them. As you may know, mining sites are dangerous places full of people who are ready to kill at any time. The majority of mining access that we got was facilitated by local leaders. We did not have much access to mining sites which are hold by armed groups. We also tried to talk in isolation to mining site responsible. Some of them could talk to us and others did not want even to meet us. In some cases we remained invisible and used other persons who were much known in the region to collect data for us. It depended on the kind of data we were looking for.

This research is mostly concerned with the situation of children who are at work in mining sites of Kalehe and Mwenga territories in South Kivu-the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have considered these two territories because they are mining sites of Colombo-tantalite, cassiterite, and gold. Colombo-tantalite is one of the ore which is highly dug in South Kivu. It is the genesis of many armed groups in South Kivu due to selfish interests. In matter of timing, this research took us a full term, i.e. from December 2015 until February 2016

## **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

Our aim to conduct this research is to let people know about the poor conditions in which children are living because of their being used as labor force in mining sites. Our goal is not to report any body but to highlight the living contexts of children who are used in mining sites of South Kivu so that anyone who may feel like making advocacy to change this way of

living of children may just make another step through the result of this paper. We also want to prepare a scientific document which may be used in the future or inspire other researchers.

## 2 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

### 2.1 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

We will only present the data in a chart and deal with statistics in the analysis. The data that we have collected in Mwenga are from mining sites of Kamituga. In this area people exploit gold and cassiterite. we have made investigations on 13 sites from where we have registered 460 children who are used as labor forces. Among these sites mention should be made of Kilobozi, Tchanda, Mobale, Calvaire, Matenende, Kabo, Mongali, Luliba, Nyawandja, Rathe, Kitemba, Hexagone, Mero.

In Kalehe we had access to 3 mining sites among which Nkwiro, Kambululu and Comima where we have registered 319 children. Mining sites of Kalehe contain Colombo-tantalite.

N <sup>o</sup>	TERRITORY	MINING SITES	ORE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
1	Mwenga	13	Gold+ cassiterite	460
2	Kalehe	3	Colombo+ cassiterite	319

*Chard: Number of territories, mining sites, ore and number of children*

Directly after making a glimpse on this chart, one easily discovers that children are highly used in mining sites which are located in Kalehe.

### 2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

We are going to analyze the data of this research by considering the age, sex, and the role that children play in mining sites.

#### 2.2.1 ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE AGE

##### 2.2.1.1 MWENGA TERRITORY

In the mining sites of Tchanda we have registered 110 children. Among these children, 94 were around 7-15 years old. The remaining children were 15 and 18 years. At Mongoli we have identified 73 children among which 65 assume 89% are aged between 6 and 17 years. Only 11% of the children are 15 years. In Calvaire we have identified 69 children, 83% of them were at least 15 and 17% were more than 15. The highest age was 17. In the mining site of Kilobozi, the average age was 15. The youngest of all the children was 12 and the oldest is 17 years old. According to the number of children that we have registered in this site, 18 children suppose 40% are between 12 and 15 years old. 60% assume 27 children are between 16 and 17 years. Comparatively to the preceding site, we have found out that the mining site Kilobozi does not use children who are under 15. At Nyawandja 95% of children assume 35 children are less than 15. The average age is 12 years old. The oldest child was 16 while the youngest was 7 years old. We have registered 96 children at Mobale among which 37 are aged between 7 and 15 years.

The average age is 14 years and the oldest is 18. 17 children over 25 are between 10 and 17 years old. At kitemba the average age is 9 years and it varies between 7 and 12 years. When we consider the age of these children we see that this average is not allowed for any job. According to these children they have been brought in mining sites to look after their young brothers when their mothers are working in mining sites. In the mining site of Matenende we have identified 16 children. The average age is 14 years. The oldest child is 15 while the youngest is 11. At Mongoli we have registered 13 children among which 10 are less than 15 years old. The average age is 13 years.

##### 2.2.1.2 KALEHE TERRITORY

Our investigations have shown that there is a big number of children which is at work in Kambululu mining site and their average age is 10 years. The oldest one is 16 years old while the youngest is 5. In effect 97 children over a thousand that we

have identified are less than 15, i.e. the age varies between 5 and 15 years. In the mining site of Nkwiro, the average age is 11 years and it varies between 5 and 19 years. Among these children 84% of children are less than 15 assume the age between 5 and 15 years. Only 16% of these children are 15 years old. My investigations in the mining site of Nkwiro-Comima have shown that there are many children who are used as labor force. The average age is 12 years. The oldest child is 18 years old while the youngest is 6 years old. Moreover, 70 children over 100 assume 70% of them are less than 15. i.e. the age varies between 7 and 15 years.

When one observes thoroughly these results as far as age is concerned it is possible to find out that the ages of these children do not allow them to work in mining sites. At the different ages which are shown above none of them is allowed to work. They should be in schools or in craft training centers. The majority of these children work in mining sites for different reasons. Some children reported that they work in mining sites because both parents have been killed by armed people during a family night attack.

Others mentioned that they are just forced by their parents to spend the whole day taking care of their young brothers in the mining sites when their mothers are at work in there. We should also mention that other children are working in mining sites because their families are very poor. They are working to help their families just for a daily poor meal. In most cases they are children from families where mothers have been raped and then fathers decide to leave the families for other places. Being raped is considered a shame in most communities all over the world.

These children are at their blooming period but there is a lack of opportunities as they do not go to school and get time to play with other children.

## **2.2.2 ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE SEX**

### **2.2.2.1 MWENGA TERRITORY**

While making this analysis which is based on sex, we may be talking sometimes about the ages of each sex group. We have found out that 79 children assume 71% are girls and 31 children suppose 29% are boys in the mining site of Tchanda. Among these children, 65 girls are between 7 and 17. Young girls make the majority of the labor force in this mining site and do hard jobs.

At Calvaire we have found 40 boys and 29 girls. The mining site of Kilobozi does not use many girls. There are only 12 girls over 45 children who are at work in this mining site. We do not praise this mining site but we make a comparison with the rate of the preceding mining site. At Mongoli 41% of children are girls and 59 % of boys assume 30 girls and 43 boys. At Nyawanja, 51% of children are girls and 49% are boys. Girls are not completely at work in Mobale mining site. 6 girls were identified and 53 boys. In Kabo we have found out 13 boys and 12 girls. At Ratche mining site we have identified only one child, a boy who was 14 years old. The same case was found at Hexagone where we registered only one boy who was 10 years old. 47% of children are made of girls while 53% are made of boys in the mining site of Kambululu. Among these 47 girls that we have identified, 24 are less than 10 assume 51% of them. About the 53% of boys, 31 assume 58% of them are between 5 and 10 years old while only 42% assume 22 boys are more than 10 years old.

### **2.2.2.2 KALEHE TERRITORY**

Among 66 children that we have identified in Nkwiro 27 of them are girls and their average age is 14 years. The youngest is 8 years while the oldest is 16 years old. One easily sees that we have also identified 39 boys. At Nkwiro mining site 35% of the identified children are girls while 65% are boys.

Children are used in mining sites of South Kivu for different purposes. From the above result, it is possible to see that the rate of girls is about the same as the rate of boys in some mining sites. When we consider the problem of job division in south Kivu communities, we may say that there is a great number of girls in South Kivu mining sites. In this part of the Democratic Republic of Congo women do contribute to socioeconomic issues but not with hard jobs such as working in mining sites. Boys are found in these mining sites because many of them are working under pressure of their former armed group commanders or other adults who have authority on them. Girls are reported in many mining sites of Mwenga because of parents who do not value the academic education of girls in this region. According to them, a girl child is someone who should wait until she grows up and find a husband who must take care of her.

### 2.2.3 ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE DUTIES IN THE MINING

Work risks and conditions are possibly different when considering the place where the activity takes place. It is essentially the transportation and treatment of ore after coming from underground of the shaft and transported by children on the head or back. Children are also used in mining sites to prepare and sell food, beer, cigarettes, cakes, and rarely hemp. Crushing, grinding, pounding, and riddling ore are the most difficult jobs that children have to fulfill along the day though they are divided into small teams for each activity.

#### 2.2.3.1 MWENGA TERRITORY

In the mining site of Tchanda, among 110 children that we have identified, 48 children assume 43% among which 46 girls are crushers of ore. 40 children among which 33 girls are in charge of keeping babies when their mother are working in the mining site. 19 children are used in collecting ore impurities and most of them are boys. 3 boys are crushers. This site contains many children who are less than 15 and the majority is made of girls. In a global way, 17 children suppose 25% are used in crushing the waste of cassiterite in Calvaire mining site; 19 children assume 28% are used in digging and the same number of children is used as collectors of cassiterite impurities while other 17% are used to take care of babies. In the mining site of Kilobozi 31 children assume 69% are used in digging, a very hard job. The other 31% of children are subdivided into crushers, impurity collectors, and ore transporters. In this site no child is used to take care of babies. At Nyawandja 12 children over 37 are ore crushers, 12 take care of babies, 10 are collectors of impurities, and 3 are used in digging. At Mobale 37 boys over 53 are used in digging, 18 boys are waste collectors, 3 girls over 6 are crushers, 1 girl is a transporter, 1 is a waste collector/riddling and another is used in digging. As it is a site where people exploit gold and Colombo-tantalite, the main activities are digging and riddling. Children take part in all these activities. At Kitemba we have 2 girls and 3 boys. 3 children are in charge of looking after babies and 2 are waste collectors. Even if we have found these children working in this mining site, we may say that this site does not use many children. According to the pieces of information that we got from some people, the police officer who was in the milieu was protecting children from mining site activities. When he left, children started joining slowly mining sites. All 13 children that we have identified in Mongoli do difficult jobs. 5 children are used in digging, 5 are waste collectors, and 2 crushers. It is clear that all these duties are hard for children.

As my readers may see, we do not present the duties of children in all mining sites of Mwenga. The reason is unique. we do not want to repeat the same activities though the figures may change according to the number of children that we have registered for every mining site. It looks like all mining sites have the same activities and there are always children to take part in any of these activities

#### 2.2.3.2 KALEHE TERRITORY

In Nkwiro 49% of children are girls and 51% of boys. Among these 49% of girls we have 50 whose ages vary between 5 and 14 years and among which 30 are used in riddling the waste of ore, 20 girls work as transporters of waste and sand in the site.

On the other side, 51% of boys stand for 73 boys who are dispatched as follows: 25 boys are used in digging, 30 boys are waste collectors, 10 boys are transporters of sand and impurities, and 8 boys are used in riddling ore. At Nkwiro-Comima the majority of children are used in waste collecting. It is mostly done by girls as boys are used to crush the ore.

All the above mining sites that we have been talking about are contributing to the reinforcement of children's rights violence. In these places children are exploited by adult who use pressure on them. According to pieces of information that we have collected about girls, some girls are sexually exploited for money making issues. Others are only intimidated by mining sites responsible to be sacked off then they accept to have sex with them. Others are forced to get married. Mention should be made of child girls who are forced by mothers to keep children in the mining site when they are working. we have also found out other kinds of activities which are done by girls who are between 15 and 17 years. These girls are used in cooking food for men who are working and fetch water for them. There are many girls who live in mining sites with men as concubines after having cooked for them for a long time even if the man is too older than the girl. The different activities that children are doing in these mining sites have negative impacts on their future lives. According to the article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of November 20, 1989 which came in force on September 2, 1990, a child should be protected against economic exploitation and should not be exposed to any labor that is full of risks which can compromise his/her education or harm his/her physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

In most mining sites boys are always bitten by adults who accuse them for having hidden a given quantity of ore. Boys who are around 17 are often in need of some money to satisfy their daily needs or their families'.

### **3 CREATING NEW LIVES FOR MINING SITE CHILDREN**

We had got some hours talking whether in groups or in isolation to mining children in different places of Kalehe and Mwenga territories about their future lives. Children have different views about the issue. 75% of children would like to be back to school, i.e. getting the school kits every year and the school fees. 73% of grown up children we mean those who were about 17 and above are not ready to go back to formal school training. They want to get knowledge from craft training centers such as joinery, carpentry, masonry, mechanics, electricity, dressmaking, barbers, hair dresser, and many others. Children want to go to school but they are complaining for the different school infrastructure that were destroyed by war displaced and armed groups. A few girls wanted to fight against economy dependence by dealing with small scale commerce and generate revenue. According to people that we talked to in mining sites, there are different reasons which push children to go to mining sites. Many children join mining sites because of poverty when their parents become unable to pay the school fees and the family has no land for small scale agriculture. Parents might also send their children to work because they do not value education, or cannot afford it. According to one study, parents represent 62 percent of the source of induction into employment. Children make their own decisions to work only 8 percent of the time (Syed et al. 1991).

The poverty and hardship in which the mine workers' families live is well illustrated with their daily diet (India Committee of the Netherlands, 2010). 8% of the children have gone to mining sites because of hunger. They said that they could just work for people in mining sites on condition that they get some food when adults eat. Economic vulnerability associated with poverty, risk and shocks plays a key role in driving children to work. Because of their size and agility, they are useful in the narrow tunnels and shafts underground. They are cheap to employ, and do not ask questions or stand up for their rights (Lydia 2014:1). In general, mining activities have a negative impact on these children lives as they cannot grow up in good conditions.

Health conditions of these children were not good because many of them are suffering from respiratory diseases due to heavy activities that they daily fulfill in mining sites. They affect their blooming period. The International Labor Organization estimates that some 22,000 children are killed at work every year. Those who survive can develop health problems later in life due to poor working conditions while their bodies and minds are still growing and developing. They also suffer from the lack of education, as few manage to attend school when working long hours in harsh conditions (Lydia, 2014). School education is one of the most powerful tools to fight against child labor in the mines. Children can learn the skills to lift them out of poverty, while they grow and develop in a safe environment.

We should mention in a particular way the case of girls who are forced for sexual issues. Unneeded pregnancies and diseases are reported in different mining sites. Many children were utilized by armed groups to work in mining sites to fund themselves and purchase weapons.

### **4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have been making, in this paper, a critical analysis of mining children's situation in two territories of South Kivu. We may conclude my research by saying that the different jobs which are done by children in mining sites of Kalehe and Mwenga are directly connected with children's rights violence. Children just work because they have been transformed into indirect slaves of their parents who ask them to contribute to the income of the families. Other children go to mining sites because their families cannot afford school or do not value it. To abolish this system is not possible if people do not think about strategies which can allow the increase of the socioeconomic situation of people living around mining sites. We believe that more than one reader of this paper agrees that if these households which live around mining sites get capacity reinforcement in economy independence activities, the number of children in mining sites may considerably decrease. Children are suffering in mining sites of Mwenga and Kalehe in South Kivu reason why we recommend anyone who feels concerned to make a step and make actions which can free children from these bad conditions of living. The first step is to identify all these children and bring them back to school. Schools are best places for children to develop their future life. Without academic education children cannot be important for their families and for themselves. Their communities of origin play a great role in sensitizing through local leaders who should also consider children's labor as a plague that is destroying the community from the roots until the branches and flowers.

To end up with this paper we would like to recommend the following to create new lives for mining children of Mwenga and Kalehe territories in South Kivu-The Democratic Republic of Congo:

#### 4.1 TO THE GOVERNMENT

The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo should:

- Reinforce the number of labor inspectors in all the mining sites of the country and particularly in mining sites of South Kivu;
- Create craft training centers in communities which are around the mining sites so that young people who are beyond the schooling age may learn different crafts instead of going to mines for difficult jobs which have negative impacts on their future lives and health;
- Reinforce strategies which can prevent people from using children as a labor force in general and particularly in mining sites;
- Collaborate with local and international NGOs and other partners who are concerned with children rights advocacy in order to end with the issue of using children as a labor force; and
- Enroll any child at birth and make a follow up of child who does not go to school. This should be done in partnership with the parents and the communities around mining sites.

#### 4.2 TO LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL NGOS

In order to fight against children labor in mining sites of South Kivu, local and international nongovernmental organizations which are at work in the DRC should:

- Make advocacy nearby administrative authorities so that they can seriously consider this issue of children labor as priority and look for measures which can prevent the community from using children in their difficult jobs;
- Identify and make academic rehabilitations of these children by providing them with school kits and school fees;
- Design projects which can facilitate economy independence for vulnerable parents who send their children in mining sites due to poverty;
- Sensitize communities so that they can stop sending and using children in mining sites instead of sending them to school;
- Rehabilitate and equip schools which were destroyed during the wars so that children from mining sites may find schools as new and beautiful places for their blooming;
- Make advocacy nearby local and national wide security agencies to withdraw mining children from that other kind of slavery; and
- Sensitize the community about fighting against gender based violence.

#### 4.3 TO THE COMMUNITY

The community should work in partnership with all local and international organizations in order to report any family which sends children to mining sites instead of sending them to school. They should also know that children labor is not preparing the future generation but destroying it reason why their contribution to fighting children labor is very important.

We may say that we have got time to verify our hypothesis from the results of our research after analyzing them. We have found out that children always go to mining sites just because they are not informed about their rights and the hardship in which they are living. Some parents send their children to mining site not only because they do not value school but also because they cannot afford it. The different jobs which are done by children in mining sites have negative impacts on their lives and health. If children were informed about these negative impacts, they could not accept going to mining sites. Poverty is the most reason which pushes children to be used in mining sites because it is a dangerous job that many adults are afraid of.

We cannot be boastful by saying that there is no short come in my piece of work reason why we invite other researchers to deepen this research so that children labor can be eradicated.

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