

David Isaac Jere

T00726370

HRSJ5230 Emergence of Global Capitalism

Dr Terry Kading and Dr Annie St John-Stark

Title: The exploitation of mineral resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo has fueled conflict, corruption and environmental degradation, and therefore urgent measures are needed to regulate the industry and ensure sustainable and equitable extraction practices.

The curse of mineral extractivism has befallen the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a nation endowed with abundant natural resources. Exploitation of minerals like cobalt, copper, and diamonds has been fueling environmental degradation, conflict, and corruption for decades, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and bloodshed. Instead of being a blessing, the DRC's abundant mineral resources have caused its people much hardship. With little consideration for the environmental and social implications, multinational businesses have extracted resources, frequently in cooperation with armed groups and unscrupulous government officials. This essay will explore the destructive impact of mineral extractivism in the DRC, examining the historical and political contexts that have enabled this exploitation, the human and environmental costs, and the potential solutions for a more sustainable and equitable future.

Conflicts, natural disasters, and economic activity have all contributed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) severe internal displacement problems. Several causes, notably the actions of multinational corporations (MNCs) and investment practices, have contributed to a disproportionate amount of internal displacement in South Kivu, one of the country's eastern provinces. Regarding internal displacement in South Kivu, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this research proposal seeks to examine the interaction between multinational corporations (MNCs) and investment practices. According to the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), Internally displaced persons are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a

result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border."

Mineral extractivism

The Congolese economy has been heavily dependent on the industrial extraction and export of raw materials since the colonial era (Bezy et al., 1981; Geenen, 2014). But from the mid-1970s onward, intermittent economic crises and violent conflicts (1996–2003) have had a significant impact on industrial productivity, which has resulted in artisanal mining of natural resources, the product of which is frequently smuggled out of the nation through "parallel" or unofficial trade networks (Geenen, 2011a). Multinational corporations often engage in resource extraction, leading to land grabbing and environmental degradation. The communities are not benefiting from the resource extraction that is taking place in the area. Some residents who spoke to Amnesty International bemoaned the lack of infrastructure such as roads, even though the dump trucks from the mines operate 24hrs a day. They extract minerals the whole day but are not giving back to the community. (Amnesty International, 2023)

Internal displacement has been connected to several industries and business ventures in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Mining is one of the industries connected to internal displacement, even though there are several factors at play and the problem is intricate in South Kivu. It's crucial to remember, though, that additional industries do contribute as well, including logging, infrastructure construction, agriculture, and the energy industry. I shall be concentrating on the mining sector in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in this essay.

Mining:

The area has an abundance of natural resources, including minerals like tin, gold, coltan, and cassiterite. The mining sector, which is controlled by both domestic and foreign corporations, has a history of using forced labor, stealing land, degrading the environment, and uprooting local populations. The extractivism of minerals in the DRC dates to the times of colonialism, when Belgium colonized the then called Zaire. The trend has continued even after independence of the country in the mid1960s. This extractivism is fueled by the global demand for minerals in electronics, electric vehicles and jewelry. The Democratic Republic of Congo has most of the world's minerals used in these electronics, they have cobalt, copper, tin, gold, diamonds, tungsten

and coltan (columbite-tantalite). The country, DRC is not benefitting from these minerals because the companies that are doing mining in the areas are working in cahoots with the corrupt government officials to embezzle funds from the country and most of these corporations are not paying taxes.

It is important to note that the relationship between these industries and investment practices and internal displacement is not always direct. Factors such as conflict, political instability, and weak governance can exacerbate the negative impacts of these industries on local communities.

Thousands of people have been displaced in South Kivu province because of the ongoing mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). With an emphasis on areas like shelter, healthcare, education, and livelihoods, this project seeks to address the humanitarian needs of these displaced people in a comprehensive and long-lasting manner. The South Kivu region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has faced significant challenges in recent years, including conflict, forced displacement, and economic instability. These challenges have hindered the region's capacity for sustainable development and peacebuilding.

Impact on local communities

Infrastructure development

The construction of infrastructure, like mines and factories, can displace local communities from their homes and livelihoods. In South Kivu, people have been displaced because of these mines. People have been forced to leave their homes. They are forced to move and are not even compensated for it. In some rare instances when these multinational corporations decide to compensate, the compensation is not even adequate to build the displaced the same type of house they had before.

Loss of homes

Many communities are forced to leave their homes, disrupting their way of life and social structures. Because their homes would have been destroyed and their farming land taken away, some men will be forced to go elsewhere to look for jobs so they can look after their families, in the process disrupting the way of life and social structures. I have put an aerial picture of one of the mines showing how close they have become to the habitat. It is also important to note that the mine is currently occupying a former residential area where the people have been displaced.



Figure 1 Showing the proximity of South Kivu, DRC and the multinational mines.

Disrupted livelihoods.

The displacement often leads to loss of access to farmland and other vital resources, impacting the livelihoods of the affected communities. In South Kivu, the local community survives on subsistence farming, they farm in their communal fields but since the onset of these mining activities most people lost their land to these mines. The paper outlines the factors that lead to displacement, such as armed conflict, interethnic conflict, and violations of human rights, and it emphasizes the difficulties that internally displaced people (IDPs) have in obtaining protection, basic amenities, and long-term solutions. Also, the paper makes suggestions on how the international community, humanitarian organizations, and the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo might meet the needs of internally displaced people and promote their reintegration. Powering Change or Business as Usual? (2023)

Psychological trauma

Communities often experience psychological distress due to the loss of stability and security. The people of South Kivu have met violence from the multinationals in respect to their land. If someone is not willing to let go of their land, violence is meted out to achieve their goals and this is sometimes done with the help of soldiers and the police. (Aljazeera,2023)

Human rights violations and environmental concerns

Land grabbing.

Multinational corporations often acquire land through coercive and unjust means, violating the rights of the local population. Geenen investigates how, ever since the end of colonialism, the industrial extraction and export of raw materials has been a major part of the Congolese economy, she also looks at the part played by capitalism in displacement. (Geenen,2014) The dominant classification of internal displacement, but one rarely applied in scientific literature, distinguishes four root causes of this process. They include conflict-induced displacement, environmentally induced displacement, disaster-induced displacement and development-induced displacement. (Terminski, 2015)

Environmental degradation.

Their activities contribute to deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity, negatively impacting the environment. The multinational corporations who are doing heavy duty mining in South Kivu are not considering the environment they are operating from. Once they are done working on a mining site, they just leave the open pit unclosed and move on to another area. This is posing dangerous hazards to people living in South Kivu. There is also air and noise pollution since the heavy-duty mines are so close to the people's houses. The exploitation of natural resources by MNCs can lead to environmental degradation, which in turn can force people to leave their homes. Deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution can all contribute to the creation of unfavorable living conditions, forcing people to move in search of better alternatives (De Koninck, 2008).

According to Amnesty International (2023), a mobile phone battery needs roughly 7g of cobalt, yet the average electric car battery needs over 13kg. After tripling since 2010, the demand for cobalt is predicted to reach 222,000 Tons by 2025. "People are being forcibly evicted, or threatened or intimidated into leaving their homes, or misled into consenting to derisory settlements," stated Donat Kambola, president of IBGDH in an interview with Amnesty International.



Figure 2 Showing the community of South Kivu and the land degradation happening.

Role of MNCs in Conflict

MNCs operating in South Kivu have been accused of fueling conflicts through their activities. These corporations often exploit natural resources, such as minerals, which can lead to competition and violence between various armed groups vying for control over these resources. Amnesty International and the DRC-based Initiative pour la Bonne Gouvernance et les Droits Humains (Initiative for Good Governance and Human Rights) describe in their report *Powering Change or Business as Usual?* (2023) how the growth of multinational mining operations has resulted in communities being ejected from their homes and farms. Moreover, these corporations can inadvertently support armed groups through their supply chains, as it can be difficult to trace and verify the origins of the materials they purchase (Global Witness, 2014). Moreover, these corporations can inadvertently support armed groups through their supply chains, as it can be difficult to trace and verify the origins of the materials they purchase (Global Witness, 2014).

Displacement as a Result of Conflict

Conflict fueled by MNC activities can lead to internal displacement of people in South Kivu. Thousands of individuals have been forced to flee their homes because of violence and insecurity (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2020). These displaced persons often face additional challenges, such as limited access to food, water, and healthcare, as well as increased

vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. However, the entry of a multinational corporation, which has the explicit support of the national government, has disrupted local power dynamics, resulting in the displacement and expropriation of former artisanal miners and left them without viable means of subsistence. Conflict fueled by MNC activities can lead to internal displacement of people in South Kivu. Thousands of individuals have been forced to flee their homes because of violence and insecurity (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2020).

The reality is considerably different, and artisanal miners routinely battle with industrial firms, even though Congolese law acknowledges artisanal mining and programs have been proposed to legitimize and assist the industry. Penz talks about the differences between various types of displaced people and the difficulties legislators have in meeting their demands. Along with examining the humanitarian and political ramifications of displacement, the book provides insights into the challenges of resolving issues pertaining to internally displaced people (IDPs) in conflict-affected areas such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Since land is frequently the foundation of IDPs' livelihoods, social networks, and opportunities, the authors contend that land is an essential resource. Penz endeavors to determine if development may currently proceed without infringing against the human rights of those residing in the area where the development is planned to occur. (Penz et al, 2011). The individuals who have been displaced in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo because of conflict and resource exploitation are documented in a report by UNOCHA. Latest figures show that an estimated 3.8 million people are internally displaced in the DRC, with high numbers of newly displaced in the Kasai region and longer-term displaced especially in the eastern provinces. (UNOCHA 2017)

Labor practices

Exploitative labor practices can have detrimental effects on local communities and workers. In the mines the multinationals are using child labor, and the women and children are working with no protective clothing. In these places there are no schools and most children have resorted to mining so they can help their families. According to a documentary Powering Change or Business as Usual?, by Amnesty International,(Amnesty International,2023) these people working for USD1 a day. The mines that buy minerals from these people are shortchanging them, when the tonnage price of cobalt is currently at USD 28 137 according to Statista.com.



Fig 3 Showing young children mining in Democratic Republic of Congo, in a river.

Health hazards

Displacement often results in compromised access to clean water and other necessities, leading to health hazards. In Fig 3 above shows people mining in a river. This alone is a health hazard as it compromises the access to clean water and thereby putting the whole community that has access to this source of water in danger. These miners and the multinational corporations use chemicals such as mercury and other chemicals when they are doing their mining, and this makes these water sources no longer suitable for human consumption. Moreover the displaced are forced into concentration camps which do not have running water or facilities. This puts them under health hazards and makes them prone to water borne diseases. The same water sources being used for mining are the same sources the people of South Kivu use for consumption.

Resolutions

As a way of making sure that these highlighted issues are addressed there is need to be focused on putting mineral regulations on the conflict minerals. Also ensuring fair treatment and upholding human rights is critical in the legal and ethical discourse surrounding displacement. For the corporations to be held accountable for their actions, especially in the context of displacement and its consequences, is crucial. If companies want to mine, they need to give the affected residents decent accommodation, the same as the one they will be moving them from or even

better. Upholding ethical business practices is vital in preventing exploitation and harm to local communities.

Advocacy and Support for Affected Populations

Humanitarian assistance

Providing immediate relief and aid to those affected by displacement is crucial for mitigating their suffering. Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and national laws in the DRC that aim to ensure that MNCs respect human rights and minimize their negative impacts on local communities. Jacobs et al. investigate the connection between livelihoods, displacement, and sustainable development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this working paper. According to Jacobs, creating successful policies and initiatives to aid in the reintegration of internally displaced people requires an understanding of the dynamics of displacement and how it affects livelihoods. The article contains suggestions for enhancing the livelihoods and general well-being of internally displaced people (IDPs) as well as insights into the difficulties they encounter in gaining access to resources, jobs, and social services. (Jacobs et al, 2017)

Legal Aid and Advocacy

Legal support and advocacy play a pivotal role in ensuring the rights of the displaced are protected and upheld. International and National Regulations such as The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). Limiting the number of individuals permitted to mine will be beneficial, as will registering the mines to facilitate tracking of activities done there and the ability to trace them if accountability for any destruction is required. Reducing the loss of once-vast green places will also be made easier with stricter, stronger, and legally mandated environmental rules (Global Witness, 2004).

Empowerment programs

Initiatives focused on providing skills and resources empower the displaced to rebuild their lives and communities. These initiatives can include community development projects, environmental conservation efforts, and support for local institutions. Some MNCs have implemented corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to mitigate the negative consequences of their operations on local communities. These initiatives can include community

development projects, environmental conservation efforts, and support for local institutions (Behl, R., Ali, S., Altamirano, J. et al.)

In a nutshell there is widespread concern and a need for serious attention to the relationship between capitalism, mining, and environmental destruction. The worldwide environmental devastation caused by resource exploitation that is not sustainable is further fueled by capitalism's quest of maximizing profits. There is substantial proof demonstrating that capitalism has already had an impact on the planet, as shown in the deforestation, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. As everyone would need to work together, global partnership will be essential. A balanced approach to the interplay between mining, capitalism, and the environment must be taken. We must seek the input of indigenous people, who have proven to us the significance of being responsible guardians of the environment.

References

- Aljazeera (2023, September 12). [Mining of cobalt, copper in DRC leading to human rights abuses: Report | Human Rights News | Al Jazeera](#)
- Amnesty International (2023, September 2023) Powering change or business as usual <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/09/drc-cobalt-and-copper-mining-for-batteries-leading-to-human-rights-abuses/>
- Behl, R., Ali, S., Altamirano, J., Hazen, A., Kandru, P., Manu, A., Mpanano, M., Mukwege, D., Ntakwinja, G., & Shah, R. (2022). Rebuilding child health in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): evaluating the Asili social enterprise program. *Conflict and Health*, 16(1), 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-022-00435-9>
- Bezy, F., Peemans, J. P., & Wautelet, J. M. (1981). Accumulation and underdevelopment in Zaire 1960-1980.
- Geenen, S. (2014). Dispossession, displacement and resistance: Artisanal miners in a gold concession in South-Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo. *Resources Policy*, 40, 90-99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2013.03.004>
- Geenen, S. (2011) "Local livelihoods, global interests and the state in the Congolese mining sector", in Ansoms, A. and Marysse, S. (eds.) *Natural Resources and Local Livelihoods in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. A political economy perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 147-69.
- Global Report. (2020). <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globalreport/>
- Global Witness (2023, November 14). A rush for Lithium in Africa risks fueling corruption and failing citizens. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/natural-resource-governance/lithium-rush-africa/>
- Jacobs, C., Flaam, H., Fowles, M., & Pangburn, A. (2017). Justice needs, strategies, and mechanisms for the displaced: Reviewing the evidence. *SSRC Working Papers*, 1-54.
- McInerney, R., & De Koninck, C. (2008). *The Writings of Charles De Koninck: Volume 1*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press

- OHCHR. (n.d.). Standards. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Standards.aspx>
- Penz, P., Drydyk, J., & Bose, P. S. (2011). Displacement by development: Ethics, rights and responsibilities. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. eBook. Retrieved from eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) database.
- UNOCHA (2017) Democratic Republic of Congo: Internally displaced persons and returnees), <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2017-enarfrzh>
- Terminski, B. (2015). Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: Causes, Consequences, and Socio-Legal Context. Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem. Retrieved from eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) database.
- The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2) [International standards | OHCHR](#)
- US Geological Survey (2009). <https://pubs.usgs.gov/publication/mineral2009>
- US State Government Reports (2023). Investment Climate Statements: Democratic Republic of Congo. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-investment-climate-statements/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>