



Slavery in Mining Communities

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is potentially one of the richest countries on earth. Its natural resources include large reserves of cobalt, diamonds, gold, tin, tungsten, tantalum and oil. However, DRC's "conflict minerals" have caused repeated wars and suffering. Families have migrated to mining sites, believing mining industries would provide additional food, wealth and services. However, life in mining communities can be brutal and results in many instances of modern forms of slavery. There is a general lack of awareness of rights and the lack of alternative livelihood opportunities.

Free the Slaves Strategy & Activities

"Strengthening Community-Driven Responses and Accountability Mechanisms to End Slavery in Eastern DR Congo Mining Zones" was a 24-month project by Free the Slaves and its partner organizations. It was designed to:

- Increase resistance to slavery in 15 vulnerable mining communities in North Kivu province; Support the implementation and reinforcement of community-based vigilance committees in mining zones; Implement livelihood support to strengthen families' abilities, particularly through the implementation of savings and loan farmer solidarity funds.
- Increase knowledge of slavery and means for resisting slavery among the general public in eastern DRC; Raise awareness among the general public on slavery using rights-based communication tools, including a film and radio programs.
- Establish an anti-slavery coalition of Congolese civil society organizations.
- Increase government officials' anti-slavery knowledge and actions in North Kivu province.

Results & Impact

- The project has succeeded in its goal to increase community-led resistance to slavery. The population's knowledge and behaviors have evolved significantly.
- The activities led to significantly improving the population's knowledge and behaviors and to reducing child labor in mines. Moreover, the involvement of partners, Congolese civil society organizations and community vigilance committees resulted in a strong commitment towards anti-slavery in the province.
- The project has been successful in changing people's practices towards slavery: more people now take action. It is also clear that parents know that their children should not work in mining sites or carry heavy loads and should be enrolled at school.

Excerpted from the December 2015 DRC project's independent evaluation conducted for the U.S. State Dept. by Synergies Cooperation