

Season of Creation 2025

Peace with Creation



Mining and Human Trafficking.

A Reflection from the Democratic Republic of Congo

by Sr. Henriette Pite, Coordinator of Talitha Kum in D.R.C.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is **one of the richest countries in the world in mineral resources**. Cobalt, copper, coltan, gold, diamond: these minerals feed the global economy and new technologies. However, this natural wealth is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it represents immense potential for development; on the other, it causes **environmental destruction, human exploitation, and human trafficking**.

The challenge is clear:

How can we extract the riches of the subsoil without destroying the land and without enslaving people?

Mining in the DRC is often synonymous with **ecological disaster**. Forests are destroyed, rivers polluted, soils depleted: the impacts are visible and long-lasting. Thousands of hectares disappear each year, threatening biodiversity and the food security of local populations. Yet, **responsible mining is possible**. It requires the use of clean technologies, restoration of sites after exploitation, and the involvement of local communities. Beyond technical aspects, it is an ethical question: **respecting the land is guaranteeing the future of coming generations**.



Congolese mineral wealth hides another reality: **human exploitation**. In several mining areas, **children** work without protection and are denied education. **Women** are victims of sexual violence and exploitation around mining sites. **Entire families** are displaced to make way for mining companies. Human trafficking is thus directly linked to mineral exploitation. Forced labor, sexual exploitation, and forced displacement have become common practices, **fueled by global demand for strategic resources**.

The fate of the land cannot be separated from the fate of people.

When nature is destroyed, **local populations pay the highest price**. Poverty and precarity make people vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Likewise, the **insatiable demand** for minerals encourages **criminal networks** to enslave human beings. The mistreatment of nature and mistreatment of people stem from the same logic: that of **profit without conscience**.

Faced with this double challenge, several avenues emerge: strengthening **public policies** against illegal exploitation, enforcing **mineral traceability**, developing **sustainable economic alternatives**, and raising **awareness** among local communities. International companies also have a major responsibility: to **refuse to buy minerals produced through human exploitation**. The DRC must build a model where resource exploitation respects both the land and people.

The DRC's subsoil holds immense treasures, but **the country's real wealth remains its people and fertile land**. Extracting resources from the land without destroying it and protecting people from trafficking are not separate struggles: they are **inseparable**. Preserving creation and defending human dignity are the two conditions for **a future of justice and peace**.

Sr. Henriette Pite



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