

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LAHORE
PRESENTS



ISLMUN IV

UNHRC
STUDY GUIDE

1st | 2nd | 3rd

NOVEMBER

AGENDA: Indentured Servitude in Congolese Mines

INDEX

- 1. Introduction to ISLMUN**
- 2. Introduction to the Dias**
- 3. Introduction to the Committee and Mandate**
- 4. Introduction to the Topic**
- 5. Definitions and Glossary**
- 6. Historical Background**
- 7. Past UN Actions**
- 8. Major Stakeholders**
- 9. UN Resolutions and Reports**
- 10. Bibliography**



Introduction to the Dias

Committee Chair: Hello everyone! My name is Somaan Fater. I'm the Senior Prefect and MUN President, and I'll be serving as your Chair for UNHRC and ISLMUN this year. Looking forward to a great conference. Good luck to all!

Committee Director:

Hello everyone, this is Hayder Shah and I will be serving as your committee director this year at UNHRC.



Committee Director:

Assalam O Alaikum Everyone! Muhammad Anosh Wahla here, your committee director for this year ISLMUN's United Nations Human Rights Council.

Assistant Committee Director :

Greetings! I'm Muarij Tahseen—the life of every gathering, the one person who never runs out of juicy gossip or fun anecdotes, as my friends believe. I'm mostly known for a laugh that can be heard from across the country and a larger-than-life personality. With an eye for opportunity, I run my own businesses and somehow manage to make even the most mundane workday feel like a party. A digital native with a knack for creating fire content, I'm also known for my good communication skills and approachability, making it easy for anyone to strike up a conversation. My energy may be infectious, and if there's a story you haven't heard yet, I'm probably the one who'll tell it—with all the best details.



Introduction to ISLMUN

ISLMUN is passionately committed to creating a vibrant and inclusive environment where participants dive into dynamic discussions and hone their leadership and negotiation skills. This year, we are set to elevate the conference to new heights, promising an unparalleled experience for all involved. Our mission is to ignite and empower the next generation of global leaders with unwavering integrity, sharp critical thinking, and a profound sense of global responsibility. This event will unite exceptional students from across institutions, offering them an extraordinary platform to tackle pressing global issues, enhance their diplomatic expertise, and engage in transformative debate.

Introduction to committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the intergovernmental body within the United Nations dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights globally. Established in 2006 to succeed the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UNHRC was created to enhance the effectiveness and impartiality of the UN's human rights agenda. Headquartered in Geneva, the Council comprises 47 member states elected by the General Assembly, ensuring balanced representation across geographic regions. Members serve staggered three-year terms with a limit of two consecutive terms to maintain diversity and fresh perspectives within the Council.

The UNHRC convenes regular sessions to address critical human rights concerns and to deliberate on thematic issues affecting fundamental rights worldwide. In addition to its sessions, the Council has the authority to establish fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry to investigate and respond to serious human rights violations. Furthermore, the UNHRC appoints Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, and working groups on various human rights issues. These experts provide informed analysis, monitor situations of concern, and offer recommendations, playing an essential role in elevating human rights issues on the international stage and encouraging meaningful reform.

Introduction to the topic

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, countless men, women, and even children work tirelessly in mines under harsh conditions, often trapped in a cycle that strips them of freedom and dignity. Driven by desperation and poverty, they dig for cobalt, copper, coltan, and other minerals that power the modern world—metals essential to the smartphones, laptops, and electric cars many of us rely on every day. But behind these devices lies a story of individuals caught in a system that, in many cases, barely pays them, forces them into heavy debt, and leaves them without basic protections.



For many miners, life is a daily struggle to survive. Promised meagre wages, some are instead bound by debts they cannot repay, working under the constant threat of violence or dismissal. With no means to leave, they find themselves compelled to work long hours in unsafe, unregulated pits. The conditions are harsh, often involving exposure to toxic materials and back-breaking labour with little or no equipment to ensure their safety. Children, too, are often forced to join the workforce, sacrificing their education and health to help their families make ends meet.

Recently, these realities have come to light on the international stage, sparking a call for change. Advocates for human rights urge companies and governments to demand ethical sourcing and protect the human dignity of Congolese miners. Yet real change requires more than just awareness; it demands the commitment of businesses, policymakers, and all of the consumers to ensure the minerals we depend on are mined by people treated with respect and fairness.

Definitions and Glossary

Indentured Servitude: A form of labour where an individual is bound to work for an employer for a specified period, often to repay debt or fulfil a contractual obligation.

In cases of exploitation, this arrangement can effectively trap workers in cycles of labour without fair compensation or freedom.

Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM): Mining practices carried out by individuals or small groups, often with limited technology, that make up a significant portion of mining in the DRC. ASM operations are typically informal and lack government regulation, leading to poor working conditions and low wages.

Debt Bondage: A condition where individuals are forced to work to pay off debts, often in exploitative conditions. This form of labour is considered a violation of human rights and is common in settings where workers are unable to escape their obligations due to ongoing debts.

Child Labour: The employment of children under the age of 18 in work that deprives them of their childhood, education, or is harmful to their health and development. In Congolese mines, children are often involved in dangerous work to contribute to family income.

Supply Chain Transparency: The degree to which companies can trace the origins of their products and ensure that materials are sourced ethically and legally. In the context of Congolese mining, transparency aims to confirm that minerals are obtained without exploiting worker

Human Trafficking: The illegal practice of recruiting, transporting, or exploiting individuals through force, fraud, or coercion. In the context of Congolese mining, some individuals may be trafficked to work in mines under inhumane conditions.



Historical background

Leopold's Exploitation and the Rubber Trade

Leopold II's exploitation of the Congo, particularly in the rubber trade, represents one of the most brutal and notorious periods of colonial rule. In 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium established the Congo Free State, claiming it as his personal property. Ostensibly, Leopold presented himself as a benefactor of the Congolese people, claiming his motives were humanitarian and that he aimed to bring civilization,



Christianity, and trade to Central Africa. However, his true intentions were profit-driven. Leopold saw in the Congo an opportunity to enrich himself through the exploitation of the region's natural resources, most notably rubber. During his rule, he implemented a system of forced labour, coercing local populations into extracting rubber under appalling and violent conditions. This system devastated Congolese communities, leaving a profound legacy of social disruption, economic exploitation, and loss of life.

The Congo Free State was established at a time when demand for rubber was booming globally. The rise of the automobile industry and advancements in machinery during the Industrial Revolution created a strong demand for rubber, which was used to manufacture tires, belts, and insulation. The Congo was particularly well-suited for rubber extraction due to its dense forests filled with rubber vines. To maximise profits, Leopold implemented a brutal regime that forced Congolese men to harvest rubber, often under the threat of violence. This regime was built on a system that resembled indentured servitude or, more accurately, slavery. Workers were bound to strict quotas, and any failure to meet these quotas could lead to horrific punishment.

To enforce his system, Leopold's agents used the Force Publique, a colonial military police force that brutally imposed quotas and discipline. The Force Publique consisted of European officers and African soldiers, many of whom were forcibly conscripted. These soldiers were instructed to use violence to ensure rubber production targets were met. Tactics included the taking of hostages from villages—usually women and children—to force men to work. If quotas were not met, punishments ranged from whippings to the severing of hands, a practice that became emblematic of Leopold's rule. Severed hands were sometimes required as proof of punishment; soldiers would present these as evidence that they had meted out punishment to those who failed to produce enough rubber. This gruesome practice led to widespread fear, obedience, and a sense of powerlessness among the Congolese people.

The working conditions for rubber harvesters were extreme. Congolese men would spend long days navigating through thick forests to extract sap from rubber vines, facing dangerous and exhausting conditions. Rubber harvesting was a time-consuming process that required stripping vines, often climbing high into trees, and processing the sticky latex sap. The labour was physically taxing, and the rubber itself was difficult to handle; it hardened quickly, requiring workers to smear it on their bodies to transport it back to collection points. This constant exposure to rubber sap and the physically gruelling work often left workers injured, covered in sores, and vulnerable to infections. Leopold's system made no provision for the well-being or health of these workers; they were viewed as expendable, a means to an end in maximising rubber output.



Leopold's demand for rubber was insatiable, and so was his pursuit of profit. The Congolese had little choice but to comply with his demands, as their resistance was met with immediate retaliation. Families and entire villages lived under the threat of punishment, and many communities were displaced or destroyed in the process. The rubber quotas became a tool of control that enabled Leopold to extract labour and resources while undermining traditional Congolese life. The Congo's social fabric was torn apart as men were taken from their communities, leaving families vulnerable and dependent on the colonisers for survival. Communities that had previously thrived on agriculture and trade were forced to abandon their livelihoods, leading to starvation and economic devastation.

The human cost of Leopold's rubber enterprise was enormous. Some estimates suggest that, under his rule, the population of the Congo was reduced by as much as 50%, due to a combination of violence, forced labour, disease, and famine. Reports from missionaries and other observers eventually reached Europe, sparking international outrage and leading to one of the earliest international human rights campaigns. Figures like British diplomat Roger Casement and American journalist Edmund Dene Morel documented the atrocities and organised global condemnation of Leopold's regime. Under mounting pressure, Leopold was forced to cede control of the Congo to the Belgian government in 1908, marking the end of the Congo Free State. However, the damage had been done. The forced labour system left deep scars on Congolese society, setting a precedent for exploitative labour practices that would continue under Belgian rule and leave lasting effects on the region.

While Leopold's direct control over the Congo ended, the legacy of his exploitative policies endured. The Congolese people suffered tremendous loss of life, cultural destruction, and displacement. The economic infrastructure established under Leopold prioritised extraction and profit over the welfare of the local population, setting the stage for future exploitation of the Congo's resources. Today, Leopold's legacy is remembered as a symbol of colonial brutality, and the effects of his rubber regime continue to reverberate in Congolese society. The story of the Congo Free State serves as a stark example of the horrors that can result from colonial greed, with Leopold's system of forced labour in the rubber trade leaving an indelible mark on the history of the Congo.

Transition to Belgian Rule and Continuation of Forced Labour

The transition from King Leopold II's Congo Free State to the Belgian Congo in 1908 marked a shift in governance but did little to improve the oppressive labour conditions faced by the Congolese people. Following international outcry over the brutal exploitation under Leopold's rule, the Belgian government took over administration of the Congo, promising reforms and oversight to protect its people. However, despite initial expectations, the Belgian government's policies continued to exploit Congo's natural resources while imposing forced labour systems in mining



and agriculture. This regime, which included practices that resembled indentured servitude, became a primary means of economic control and profit generation for Belgium.

Motivations for Belgian Rule and Economic Interests

The Congo's immense wealth in natural resources was Belgium's primary motivation for taking control. The Congo Free State's notoriety, stemming from Leopold's abuses, had brought international condemnation, but the Belgian state saw an opportunity to capitalise on the region's vast mineral resources, especially copper, cobalt, and diamonds. Unlike the haphazard extraction practices under Leopold, the Belgian colonial administration aimed to develop Congo's resources systematically. Mining became a central focus, with major mining operations established by companies like Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK), which would go on to dominate the economic landscape.

UMHK was granted exclusive rights to extract minerals in the resource-rich Katanga region, which held some of the world's largest deposits of copper and cobalt. The Belgian government held shares in UMHK, creating a close, mutually beneficial relationship that tied the colony's economy directly to Belgium's industrial ambitions. This alliance meant that Belgian policies were geared toward maximising mineral production, even if it meant perpetuating exploitative labour practices.

Forced Labour and Conscripted Workers in the Mines

While the Belgian administration pledged to eliminate the brutal forced labour systems that had characterised Leopold's Congo Free State, in practice, they adapted similar methods to fit the needs of large-scale mining. The Belgian authorities needed a steady supply of cheap labour to meet production quotas, especially as demand for copper and other minerals rose due to industrialization and, later, the needs of European militaries during World War I and World War II.

To fulfil these labour needs, the administration relied heavily on conscripting workers from rural areas, binding them to contracts that limited their freedom of movement and set them in dangerous working environments. Rural men were often taken from their communities under duress, relocated to mining towns, and required to fulfil labour contracts that paid minimal wages and offered little to no security. Conditions in the mines were harsh, with workers facing long hours and dangerous tasks without adequate safety measures. Injury, illness, and death were common, and healthcare was minimal.

Living conditions for mine workers were strictly controlled. Employers provided cramped and poorly maintained housing close to the mining sites, where workers lived under constant surveillance. These compounds restricted the workers' ability to



leave or engage with the outside world, thereby maintaining a tight grip on their movements and actions. This control mechanism echoed the principles of indentured servitude, as workers found themselves tied to the mines, unable to freely seek other employment or return to their villages.

Colonial Justifications and Social Impact

The Belgian colonial administration justified these practices as part of a “civilising mission” that would modernise the Congo and prepare its people for eventual self-governance. In reality, the benefits of this so-called mission were reaped almost exclusively by Belgium, while the Congolese people saw little improvement in their own living standards. Belgium profited enormously from Congo’s mining industry, which contributed significantly to the national economy and funded Belgian industrial and infrastructure projects. This economic arrangement left little incentive for the administration to improve labour conditions or invest in Congolese welfare, as the colony was viewed as a means of resource extraction rather than a community in need of development.

The social impact of forced labour was profound. Traditional communities were upended as men were forcibly removed from their villages, leaving families without support. Agricultural activities declined as a result, leading to food shortages and increased dependence on European imports. The emphasis on mining disrupted local economies, as the Congolese were forced to shift from subsistence farming to an industrial labour economy that offered little security. This dislocation weakened family and community ties, frayed traditional social structures, and created a lasting sense of resentment and disempowerment among the Congolese population.

Resistance, Labour Movements, and the Push for Independence

Despite the severe restrictions and repression, resistance to these exploitative labour practices gradually emerged. By the 1940s, Congolese labourers, especially in the mining sector, began to organise strikes and form labour unions, demanding better wages, improved working conditions, and more autonomy. These early labour movements were met with hostility and suppression from the colonial authorities, who often used violence to quell strikes. However, the discontent continued to grow, feeding into broader anti-colonial sentiment that questioned Belgium’s right to rule and exploit Congo’s resources.

Labour unions, protests, and strikes became key channels for expressing dissatisfaction and resistance against the colonial regime. The organised pushback from workers played a significant role in building momentum for Congo’s independence movement. The struggle for labour rights and fair treatment in the mining industry, alongside demands for political freedom, coalesced into a powerful drive for independence, which was achieved in 1960.



The Enduring Legacy of Forced Labor in Congolese Mines

Although Belgium officially ended its colonial rule in 1960, the systems of exploitation and forced labour had lasting effects. The structures set up by the colonial administration continued to influence the post-colonial mining industry, and multinational corporations retained significant control over Congo's resources. In many cases, Congolese workers today still face exploitative labour practices reminiscent of the colonial period. Low wages, poor safety standards, and minimal job security are still prevalent issues in the modern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the mineral wealth benefits foreign corporations more than the local population.

The colonial legacy in Congo's mining industry highlights the deep social and economic scars left by Belgian rule. The system of indentured servitude under Belgian colonialism eroded traditional communities, disrupted local economies, and established exploitative practices that persist to this day. Forced labour in the mines became a symbol of colonial brutality, representing the economic and human costs of a colonial system focused on extraction and profit. The continued struggles faced by Congolese workers reflect the enduring impact of these policies, underscoring the need for fair labour practices and a more equitable approach to resource management in the DRC.

Labour Conditions in Congolese Mines

To supply a constant, cheap labour force for these mines, the colonial administration adopted labour practices akin to indentured servitude. Workers were often conscripted from rural areas, forcibly relocated to mining sites, and bound by contracts that kept them tied to the mines for extended periods. These contracts offered wages so low they barely covered the cost of basic necessities, keeping workers in perpetual poverty. Once conscripted, labourers faced gruelling and hazardous work. Mining conditions were especially harsh, with minimal attention paid to safety standards.

Miners worked with little protection from toxic fumes, sharp rocks, or unstable tunnels, which frequently led to injury and death. Rockfalls, collapses, and toxic exposure were common, contributing to high mortality rates. Medical facilities were scarce, and injuries were often left untreated. Living quarters provided by employers were rudimentary, often consisting of crowded compounds close to mining sites, where workers' movements could be tightly monitored and restricted.

The Belgian colonial administration justified these practices under the guise of a "civilising mission." Officials argued that mining work and industrial labour would modernise the Congolese and prepare them for eventual self-governance. In reality,



however, these policies served as tools for economic exploitation rather than social development. Workers had no say in their employment terms, could not leave their contracts, and faced severe repercussions for any dissent.

Forced Relocations and Social Disruption

To ensure a steady labour supply for the mines, the colonial administration implemented forced relocation policies. Men from rural areas were frequently conscripted, while their families were sometimes relocated to ensure compliance. Entire communities were displaced, severing them from their traditional lands and livelihoods. The forced removal disrupted established cultural and economic systems, forcing people into mining labour as a means of survival.

These relocations had lasting socio-economic impacts, as they strained traditional networks of family and community support. The loss of agricultural and pastoral lands, along with a shift toward cash economies dominated by European goods, undermined indigenous Congolese society. Such disruptions contributed to long-term social disintegration, as generations of Congolese people were removed from their ancestral lands and thrust into exploitative labour environments.

Resistance and Rise of Labour Movements

Over time, resistance to these oppressive labour practices grew among the Congolese people. Although strikes, protests, and other forms of resistance were frequently repressed by the colonial authorities, organised opposition eventually took root. The 1940s saw the emergence of labour unions and workers' rights movements in the Congo, driven by increasing discontent with dangerous working conditions, low wages, and the overall exploitation by foreign companies.

These labour movements, though initially small and fragile, played a significant role in fostering anti-colonial sentiment. The Congolese began to see the broader political context of their economic exploitation, linking it to a lack of political autonomy. Labour unions and protests became vital forums for expressing grievances, and calls for improved working conditions gradually transformed into calls for independence. This resistance movement laid some of the groundwork for the independence struggle that would later culminate in Congo's liberation from Belgium in 1960.

Legacy of Exploitation in Post-Independence Congo

Despite achieving independence, the legacy of colonial exploitation continued to shape Congo's economy and labour practices. Post-colonial Congo, now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), remains rich in minerals and resources, but much of its wealth has continued to benefit foreign corporations rather than the local population. Multinational corporations, drawn by Congo's rich deposits of cobalt, copper, and other minerals essential to modern technology, often work with



local elites, perpetuating patterns of economic inequality established under colonial rule.

In many mining regions, workers continue to face poor labour conditions, low wages, and unsafe environments. Child labour, particularly in the informal mining of cobalt, remains a serious issue, with families sometimes sending children to work in hazardous conditions due to lack of alternatives. Modern labour abuses echo colonial-era practices, as workers have limited rights, minimal pay, and few opportunities to improve their situations. Additionally, the environmental degradation caused by unchecked mining practices continues to harm local communities, impacting agriculture, water sources, and public health.

Social and Environmental Impacts Today

The historical exploitation of the Congo's resources under colonial rule has left a lasting impact on the DRC's social and environmental landscape. The forced relocations, exploitative labour practices, and economic policies initiated during Belgian rule dismantled traditional social structures, leading to poverty and instability that persist today. The intense extraction of minerals has led to environmental damage, including deforestation, soil erosion, and water contamination, which has compromised agricultural productivity and health in mining regions.

The DRC's struggle with labour abuses, environmental damage, and social inequities in the mining sector underscores the unresolved legacy of colonial exploitation. Efforts to improve mining labour standards, enforce environmental protections, and establish fair economic policies have made some headway, but challenges remain significant. International organisations and local advocacy groups continue to call for reforms, but the DRC's economic dependence on mineral exports and foreign investments complicates progress.

In summary, the story of indentured and forced labour in Congolese mines under Belgian rule reveals a historical trajectory of exploitation that has left lasting scars on the DRC. From Leopold's personal rubber empire to the mineral-driven labour systems of Belgian Congo, these practices undermined local societies and established patterns of economic inequality that persist in the modern era. The DRC's history of resource exploitation offers essential insights into the complex relationship between colonialism, economic dependency, and labour rights, highlighting the importance of fair labour practices and sustainable development in Congo's ongoing journey toward equitable growth.

Past UN actions



The United Nations (UN) has taken various actions over the years to address forced labour, child labour, and human rights abuses in the mining industry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), although the focus on specifically "indentured servitude" has broadened into a focus on modern forms of exploitation. The history of UN actions involves monitoring, reporting, and recommending reforms aimed at improving labour conditions, tackling human rights violations, and promoting sustainable development in the Congolese mining sector.

1. Condemnation of Human Rights Abuses

Since the mid-20th century, the UN has condemned forced labour practices worldwide, with specific attention given to the legacy of exploitation in resource-rich regions like the DRC. While the UN initially concentrated on condemning colonial labour practices, after Congo gained independence in 1960, attention shifted to modern instances of labour abuses, including those in Congolese mines. The UN's stance on forced labour in the DRC emphasises that economic activities should uphold human rights and dignity.

2. International Labour Organization (ILO) Involvement

The UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) has taken a prominent role in tackling forced and child labour in the DRC, setting standards and offering guidance for humane labor practices. Since Congo's independence, the ILO has encouraged the DRC to adopt international labour conventions, including Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour (1930) and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (1999). These conventions target abusive labour practices, particularly focusing on protecting minors and addressing the ongoing exploitation of Congolese workers in the mining sector.

3. UN Reports and Investigations

The UN has conducted regular investigations and published reports highlighting the human rights situation in Congolese mines. Through the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN has reported on instances of child labour, poor working conditions, and forced labor in the DRC's mines. For instance, the 2010 report on "The Human Rights Situation in the DRC" drew international attention to the exploitation of workers and urged immediate reforms.

More recent reports, such as those by the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, have investigated supply chains and linked resource exploitation to funding armed groups, who often control mining areas through forced labour. These findings have helped increase global awareness of exploitative practices and reinforce the need for responsible mining practices.



4. Promoting the “Due Diligence” Framework

The **due diligence framework** was introduced to help companies address human rights abuses within their supply chains, focusing particularly on industries in high-risk and conflict-affected areas like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Recognizing that exploitation, forced labour, and child labour are prevalent in the extraction of valuable minerals, this framework aims to promote corporate accountability and support ethical supply chain management.

The foundation of the due diligence framework lies in the **United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** from 2011. These principles set a global standard for businesses under the "Protect, Respect, Remedy" framework, requiring companies to protect human rights, respect them throughout their operations, and provide remedies when violations occur. The due diligence component, specifically, obligates companies to rigorously assess and address potential or actual negative impacts on human rights within their supply chains.

In 2010, the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** released a comprehensive set of guidelines called the "Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas." This guidance provides practical steps for companies to ensure they do not inadvertently support forced labour, conflict financing, or other abuses. This includes creating and implementing strong internal management systems that ensure compliance with responsible sourcing standards, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities among company leadership to uphold these policies. To identify risks, companies are encouraged to map their supply chains, tracing minerals back to their source to determine if there are any risks of forced or child labour, which is a significant concern in regions like the DRC.

Upon identifying risks, companies are expected to develop strategies to mitigate or eliminate them. This may include terminating relationships with suppliers that cannot meet responsible sourcing standards or collaborating with suppliers to improve labour practices. Independent, third-party audits of supply chains are also recommended to ensure adherence to ethical standards. These audits provide an additional level of oversight, verifying that suppliers maintain responsible practices and addressing gaps that internal assessments may overlook.

An essential element of the due diligence framework is transparency. Companies are expected to report their findings and the steps they are taking to mitigate any risks within their supply chains, providing consumers and stakeholders with insights into their ethical sourcing efforts. This transparency fosters accountability, as well as a market where consumers can make informed choices.



Although the due diligence framework has significantly influenced companies sourcing minerals from the DRC and other high-risk regions, it has faced several challenges. One major difficulty is tracing minerals back to their sources, as they often pass through numerous intermediaries before reaching manufacturers. Another challenge lies in monitoring small-scale or informal mining sectors, which often operate outside formal regulatory oversight and may struggle to comply with ethical sourcing requirements.

Despite these challenges, the due diligence framework has marked a considerable shift in corporate approaches to ethical sourcing. It has encouraged companies to work toward supply chains free from human rights abuses, aligning economic activity with human rights standards and promoting sustainability. As ethical consumerism rises, the due diligence framework continues to be a critical tool in the fight against forced labour and other exploitative practices in industries dependent on resources from vulnerable areas.

5. UNICEF and Child Labor Initiatives

In collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN has worked to address child labour in Congolese mines. One of UNICEF's notable programs involves advocacy and support for children working in mines, with initiatives aimed at removing children from mining sites and providing education and social services. This work addresses one of the enduring legacies of colonial exploitation: the dependence on child labour as part of the workforce. UNICEF continues to collaborate with local NGOs to create alternative educational and employment opportunities for Congolese children.

6. MONUSCO and Security Concerns in Mining Regions

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the UN's peacekeeping mission in the DRC, has also played a role in addressing forced labour indirectly by focusing on the security dynamics in mining regions. Armed groups often control mineral-rich areas, using forced labour as a means of income. By aiming to stabilise these areas, MONUSCO works to reduce the influence of these groups and their coercive practices, including forced labour and exploitation.

7. Global Call for Responsible Mineral Sourcing

The UN has consistently promoted responsible sourcing of minerals, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as the DRC. Resolutions from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and various recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council emphasise the importance of supply chain transparency to combat forced labour. For example, UNSC Resolution 1952 (2010) called for strengthened



accountability among companies sourcing minerals from the DRC, encouraging compliance with the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains, which sets standards for eliminating forced labour and other abuses in mining.

8. Human Rights Council's Reporting and Awareness-Raising Efforts

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has conducted regular reviews of the DRC's human rights record, including forced labour. Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) provide a platform for international dialogue and recommendations for the DRC to reform labour practices. The HRC's attention to the issue helps maintain pressure on the DRC to address and abolish any lingering forms of forced labour, particularly in the mining industry.

Major Stakeholders

Governments: The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) struggles with corruption, limited resources, and political instability, which obstruct effective regulation of the mining industry. Local authorities may turn a blind eye to exploitative practices, often motivated by financial incentives or pressure from foreign investors. Their failure or reluctance to enforce labour laws allows indentured servitude to persist.

Multinational Corporations: Many companies take advantage of weak labour regulations and exploitative practices. These corporations frequently prioritise profit over ethical labour standards, resulting in severe conditions for workers. Their supply chains often include materials obtained from artisanal mines where indentured servitude is widespread.

International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs): NGOs document abuses, raise awareness, and advocate for policy reforms but failure to do so lead to more issues. They conduct investigations and publish reports that shed light on the conditions faced by miners, pressuring both corporations and governments to improve labour practices.

Local Communities and Miners: The miners, often from impoverished backgrounds, are the victims of the issue. Many in indentured servitude due to economic necessity, a lack of alternative job opportunities, and the promise of wages that frequently go unpaid or are inadequate. Their vulnerability is exploited, and they often work in unsafe conditions with minimal legal protections.

International Regulatory Bodies: Organisations like the United Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) seek to establish standards and frameworks



for safeguarding workers' rights worldwide. They provide guidelines and conventions that member states are encouraged to adopt. However, enforcement remains challenging, especially in areas with weak local governance.

UN Resolutions and Reports

Several UN bodies, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations Human Rights Council, are established with the issue of indentured servitude in mind globally.

UN Security Council Resolution 1291 (2000) established the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), later renamed MONUSCO, which plays a role in stabilising the DRC and monitoring human rights abuses in conflict zones, including forced labour issues.

UN Security Council Resolution 1493 (2003) expanded the mandate of MONUC to help address the security situation in the DRC, including monitoring the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which often funds armed groups that use forced labor.

UN Security Council Resolution 1857 (2008) further strengthened sanctions against individuals and entities involved in the illegal exploitation of the DRC's natural resources, a measure aimed at curbing forced labour and funding of armed groups.

UN Security Council Resolution 2021 (2011) emphasised the importance of implementing due diligence guidance in the mineral trade from the DRC, specifically referencing the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas.

UN General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) – Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – Though not specific to the DRC, this foundational document enshrines labour rights and freedoms from slavery and forced labour, setting a universal standard against labour exploitation.

Article 4 of the United Nations Human Rights Council prohibits slavery and servitude, ensuring that no one is held against their will in such conditions along with **Article 23** which affirms the right to work, to free choice of employment, and to just and favourable conditions of work, emphasising the importance of dignity in labour & **Article 25** highlights the right to an adequate standard of living, including essential needs like food, clothing, and housing, which are crucial for a decent life.



International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions which address forced labour and workers' rights.

ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour which highlights the principle that forced or compulsory labour is unacceptable and outlines measures for its eradication.

ILO Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour which focuses on the prohibition of forced labour in all its forms and calls for immediate action to eliminate it.

ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise which ensures workers' rights to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests.

Several reports by the UN Human Rights Council have documented human rights abuses within the mining sector, emphasising the necessity for accountability and compliance with international human rights standards. These reports often highlight the plight of workers subjected to unsafe conditions and exploitation.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goal 8 to be exact focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, as well as full and productive employment and decent work for all. This goal aims to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery, and ensure safe and secure working environments for all workers.

Bibliography

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2023/02/01/1152893248/red-cobalt-congo-drc-mining-siddharth-kara>

<https://enoughproject.org/blog/congo-connection-between-slavery-and-conflict-minerals>

<https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/04/in-the-congo-applying-research-to-is-sues-of-poverty.html>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214790X20303154>

<https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2024/03/13/human-cost-cobalt-modern-slavery-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214790X20303154>

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>



<https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsjYoiCfMKoIRv2FVaVzRkMjTnjRO%2Bfud3cPVrcM9YR0iix49nFOsUPO4oTG7R%2Fo7TSsorhtwUUG%2By2PtslYr5BlDM8DN9shT8B8NpbsC%2B7bODxKR6zdESeXKjlnNU%2BgQ%3D%3D#:~:text=>

https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_IL O_CODE:C087

https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C105

https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_IL O_CODE:C029

<https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdos/2015/en/106493>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/gabinetpostal/lestat-lliure-del-congo-un-genocidi-a-lombra/?lang=en>

<https://questoes.blogs.com/files/king-leopolds-ghost---adam-hochschildf.pdf>

https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acref_ore-9780190277734-e-846#:~:text=In%20the%20collective%20memory%2C%20forced,the%20context%20of%20harvesting%20rubber.

https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acref_ore-9780190277734-e-846

https://works.swarthmore.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/fac-french/article/1044/&path_info=Anti_Colonial_Resistance_In_The_Former_Belgian_Colonies.pdf

<https://congoinconversation.fondationcarmignac.com/en/reportages/protesting-belgium-s-colonial-legacy-in-congo-pamela-tulizo>

<https://www.fromlocaltglobal.co.uk/post-colonial-experiences>

https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2641&context=honorstheses1990-20_15

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/drc-mining-industry-child-labor-and-formalization-small-scale-mining>

https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acref_ore-9780190277734-e-846



<https://www.cadtm.org/Labour-movements-in-Congo>

<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/congolese-win-independence-belgian-empire-19-59-60>

