



Peace & Justice Journal

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*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”
(Jeremiah 29:11)*

The prophet Jeremiah sought to assure a group of displaced persons they had reason to hope. In Jeremiah 29:7 he further encouraged them to consider their welfare as being bound up in the welfare of their host community, saying, “for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

In a globalized economy and shared ecosystem, how do we define such interdependence today?

Recognizing the harm climate change has caused and pushing for more wind turbines, electric vehicles and solar panels, we risk repeating mistakes of the past. Repeating the sins of Empire.

Renewable energy requires certain *critical minerals*. But the mining of these minerals is fueling displacement and violent conflict in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Read on to learn more about these complex dynamics and ways we can advocate for policies that consider the welfare of the *whole* of God’s community.

—Tammy Alexander

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Jacqueline Kafuti, a community leader for MCC partner CEFMC, was the first person in her community to welcome displaced families and has encouraged other families to do the same. MCC/Fairpicture photo/Justin Makangara

A future with hope in the Democratic

In geographical size, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second largest country in Africa and eleventh largest in the world. It is bordered by nine countries: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

Like many other places around the world, DR Congo experienced years of brutal colonization by European powers until gaining independence in 1960. A beautiful country with an all-year evergreen landscape, DR Congo has a population of 115 million (2024).

Eastern DR Congo is richly endowed with enormous mineral and natural resources such as gold, lithium, coltan, and cobalt. It accounts for nearly 70% of global cobalt production, making the country a resource reserve for the global green energy transition.

Though DR Congo is rich in mineral resources, particularly critical minerals, its Human Development Index ranking is low at 180 out of 193 countries (2022). Many factors contribute to this low ranking, including a long history of exploitation and a lack of effective governance.

Complex conflict dynamics and their effects

Since 1996, violent conflict has caused approximately six million deaths in DR Congo. Many historical, political and economic factors contribute to conflict, including the proliferation of armed non-state militias and competition for critical minerals at national, regional and international levels. Also contributing to the complex dynamics are inter-ethnic conflicts, organized crime, natural disasters, and heavy-handed military responses within the country.

According to the United Nations, 7.3 million persons were forcefully displaced across DR Congo by July

2024, a figure that is expected to increase. The country also hosts refugees from Burundi, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Rwanda.

Such forcible displacement of people causes a number of severe humanitarian crises. Families lose access to livelihoods, nutritious food and health care. Dislocation also leads to trauma and greater vulnerability to gender-based violence, human trafficking, child labor and abuse, and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Localizing creative and sustainable approaches

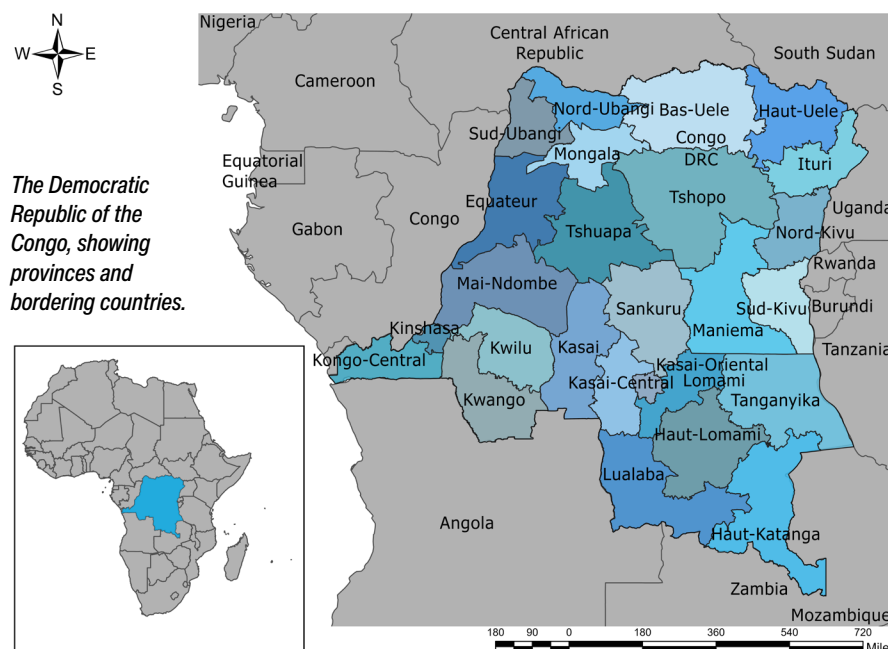
There are many opportunities for peace and prosperity in DR Congo. This includes the possibility for ceasefire negotiations between armed groups. However, it is important that such processes are fully inclusive and offer a safe space for community participation.

Mennonite Central Committee works alongside partners with a *triple nexus* approach—sustainable development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian assistance—to address



Students Angele Kingenzi, 13, Berenice Leta, Mama Bilo and Malaku Mazenga at Malwanu Institute in Kanzombi. The institute receives funding from GEFMC for a displaced children program. Angele dreams of becoming a computer engineer. MCC/Fairpicture photo/Justin Makangara

the effects and root causes of violence. MCC partners in DR Congo include the Church of Christ in Congo's Ministry of the Church for Refugees and Emergencies; Oasis de la Culture, the Community of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Congo; Mennonite Community in Congo; Programme de Paix et Reconciliation; and Women Situation Room (a consortium project of several partners).



The Democratic Republic of the Congo, showing provinces and bordering countries.

Map created by Ally Welty Peachy with ArcGIS Pro (using the provincial Shapefile obtained from the common geographical reference for DR Congo)

Republic of the Congo

Programs that are locally-led and locally-implemented by MCC partners support women's economic and social empowerment, trauma awareness, resilient and sustainable agriculture, village savings and loans associations, and local health clinics.

U.S. policies toward DR Congo

U.S. foreign policy toward DR Congo should focus on localized approaches, increased funding for humanitarian assistance, and ethical mining practices.

Localized approaches: Development and peacebuilding efforts are sustainable when the communities involved have input into crafting solutions and fully own the process. Such approaches strengthen the capacity of local organizations and local governments—allowing for more efficient and effective use of foreign assistance, and ultimately reducing dependence on U.S. dollars.

MCC/airpicture photo/Justin Makangara



Lepetit Mawonda Malala, an agricultural engineer, provides technical advice to displaced people who are growing crops in fields provided by MCC partner CEFMC.

Increased funding: Generous funding for programs such as Food for Peace is vital in responding to the growing number of humanitarian crises exacerbated by increased violent conflicts and natural disasters. Such programs also help communities build resilience to chronic challenges and sudden shocks.

Ethical mining practices: The global green energy transition is requiring vast mineral resources, with a large percentage coming from countries in Africa. New trade agreements should establish strong

and enforceable labor, environmental and human rights protections for mining operations. The U.S. should also rejoin the global Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Just transition: A fair and just green energy transition will require radical reductions in consumption in wealthy countries, socio-economic benefits for all, and an emphasis on local solutions and consent—this includes Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) when mining could affect Indigenous lands.

—Charles Kwuelum

Critical minerals, displacement, and MCC partners in action

by Jacob Yoder, MCC Representative for DR Congo

The climate crisis is spurring a global shift toward renewable energy sources with the hoped-for goal of eliminating reliance on fossil fuels. This has intensified the demand for minerals essential for creating stable and longer-lasting batteries and capacitors found in solar panels, electric vehicles, wind turbines and nearly all electronics.

As economies reposition themselves to embrace greener energy, it may be tempting to argue that the green transition is a vehicle for global development. The case in eastern DR Congo, however, presents a much more complex picture. While the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu – bordering Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi – play an increasingly important role in providing global supply chains with the coltan, cassiterite, and gold that fuel green economies, the region contains the largest and growing populations of displaced people in DR Congo today. The displacement crisis in eastern Congo is driven by local, regional, and international power struggles, with access to minerals playing a central role in conflict dynamics.

One major rebel group, M-23, has dramatically expanded their domain in North Kivu during the last two years. This group controls key coltan mining villages where local communities rely on the income from artisanal (non-mechanized) mining to address their basic needs. Like other armed groups in the area, M-23 uses motorcycles, trucks, and boats to smuggle coltan into neighboring countries, thereby avoiding the heavy taxes levied on mineral sales inside DR Congo.

Controlling mineral supply chains is perceived as critical to the economic development of DR Congo and its neighbors, and could also have a stabilizing effect on internal politics and enhance peacebuilding efforts. DR Congo has struck deals with companies in Europe, China, the U.S., and on the Arabian Peninsula to supply the minerals that make battery and other electronic components that provide “clean” energy. The human cost, however, is heavy, with millions displaced, nearly 25 million people in crisis-level food insecurity, and over 7 million in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The

promises of green minerals to bring development are not reaching the Congolese people.

It is in this context that MCC works with Programme de Paix et Reconciliation (PPR), one of several local partners helping repair these broken systems. PPR has initiated a three-year project with three key pillars:

1. Improve collaboration between mining operators, the government and the community to ensure the revenue of mining operations is shared with the local community for development.
2. Rehabilitate abandoned mines into fishponds and tree plantations by negotiating with mining operators to fulfill their legal responsibilities to protect and restore the environment.
3. Monitor armed group activity.

Local communities empowered with tools of advocacy, negotiation and mediation have a vital role to play in bringing equity and justice into an extractive system that heavily favors militias, international mining companies and wealthy nations.

Worship resources

Songs

VT 421 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
VT 444 I Sing with Exultation

Intercessory prayer

(adapted from Psalms 91 and 121)

Leader: For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

All: May your gifts be a blessing to us.

Leader: You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

All: May your gifts be a blessing to us.

Leader: I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

All: May your gifts be a blessing to us.

Leader: The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

All: May your gifts be a blessing to us.

Leader: The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

All: May your gifts be a blessing to us.

Let us pray (VT 994)

Gracious God,
when there is nothing we can say,
we give you thanks
that your Spirit intercedes for us
with sighs too deep for words.

Loving God,
when there is nothing we can do,
we give you thanks
that you are working for good
in this world of struggle and pain.

Holy God,
when there is nothing else we know,
still we give you thanks
that nothing in life or in death,
nothing in heaven or on earth,
nothing in this world or the world
to come
will ever separate us from your great
love;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

VT = *Voices Together* hymnal. Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2020.

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house.gov

President Joseph Biden
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
(202) 456-1111
whitehouse.gov/contact

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- Download your advocacy toolkit at mcc.org/advocacy-toolkit-us

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All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.



Facts & figures: The Democratic Republic of the Congo



7.3 million

number of persons forcibly displaced
in DR Congo as of July 2024

25.4 million people

or 22% of the population in DR Congo, will
require life-saving assistance in 2024 (projection)

Above: Colette Koy Mazau, a sixth-grade math teacher at Malwanu Institute in Kanzombi, Kwilu Province, DR Congo, has been trained in peace, trauma awareness, healing and child protection. Many of her students have been displaced by violence in the Kasai region. MCC/Fairpicture photo/Justin Makangara Right: Coltan/tantalum, DR Congo. Responsible Sourcing Network



2012

600%

Expected increase in mineral demand
by 2040 to reach net zero emissions
targets by 2050



MCC/Fairpicture photo/Justin Makangara

250
local armed
groups and
14
foreign
armed groups

Fighting for
territory, mines or
other resources in
eastern DR Congo

Critical mineral deposits on the continent of Africa

MINERAL	% share of global deposits
Lithium	5%
Cobalt	47%
Copper	6%
Graphite	21%
Chromium	80%
Rare Earth Elements	15%
Manganese	85%
Platinum group metals	80%



Sources: International Energy Agency, Science Direct, United Nations News, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, U.S. Institute of Peace

Policy Principles

U.S. policy toward DR Congo should . . .

Resources for learning more

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo

U.S. Institute for Peace
usip.org/regions/africa/democratic-republic-congo

Indigenous Environmental Network
ienearth.org/justtransition

World Resources Institute
wri.org/insights/critical-minerals-us-climate-goals

Friends of the Congo
friendsofthecongo.org/climate-change/



Benedicte Masamba, in charge of overseeing a borehole at Kikwit 3 (a CEFMC project), helps people fill Gerry cans, collects money from those who need to pay, and makes sure displaced people and host families have orderly access to water. MCC/Fairpicture photo/Justin Makangara

Localize approaches

Development and peacebuilding efforts are sustainable when the communities involved have input into crafting solutions and fully own the process. **The U.S. must enact legislation that would significantly improve U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) localization efforts and enable local actors to develop local solutions to local problems.** Such approaches strengthen the capacity of local organizations and local governments—allowing for more efficient and effective use of foreign assistance, and ultimately reducing dependence on U.S. dollars.

Increase funding levels

Congress should increase funding levels for U.S. foreign assistance related to hunger and malnutrition in order to respond to the growing number of humanitarian crises exacerbated by increased violent conflicts and natural disasters. In particular, funding should be increased for the Food for Peace Program (emergency and non-emergency) in the Farm bill, the McGovern Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, and the Emergency Food Security Program. These programs are effective and help communities build resilience to chronic challenges and sudden shocks.

Ensure a just transition

U.S. policies should be guided by principles and practices that shift from an extractive economy to a **regenerative, net-zero economy, and in a way that is equitable and just.** A just transition requires radical reductions in consumption, socio-economic benefits for all, and an emphasis on local solutions and consent—this means Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) when mining is proposed on or adjacent to Indigenous land.

Promote justice and ethics in mining

The global green energy transition is requiring vast mineral resources, with a large percentage coming from countries in Africa. New **trade agreements** should establish strong and enforceable labor and environmental standards and protect human rights throughout the mining process. The U.S. should **rejoin the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative** to increase engagement in international mining transparency efforts. The **Critical Minerals TRACE Act** ensures minerals are sourced in the most sustainable and ethical way possible and promotes a circular economy emphasizing battery recycling. To encourage justice in domestic mining, the **Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act** includes environmental standards, requires consultation with Indigenous communities, and establishes funds for post-mining rehabilitation.

