



# Building Hope Justice and Peace in DR Congo

## A Community Development Program to Prevent Human Rights Violations in the Copper-Cobalt Mining Areas of Kolwezi.

Despite spectacular mineral wealth, the DR Congo is a fragile state, ranked perennially at or near the bottom of the Human Development Index. Protecting the country's most vulnerable isn't just a challenge. It's key to Congo's future. Women, girls and children living in minerals-rich areas are often forced to live and work in dangerous and undignified conditions. Their rights to healthcare, education and freedom are at risk. In 2012, Good Shepherd Sisters (GSS) established programs in Kolwezi to assist these vulnerable groups, specifically in the artisanal mining communities (ASM) of Domaine Marial, an isolated, impoverished and underserved mining area around the city of Kolwezi. This is the heart of the DRC's cobalt and copper belt. The outcomes of Good Shepherd activities in this region of DR Congo, as stated in GSS strategic plan 2013-2017, are:

1. Strengthen child protection systems and improve the provision of basic services for children.
2. Enhance cohesive citizenship within the artisanal mining community to lobby the Government for an equitable distribution of resources and to increase the accountability of the companies involved in the copper-cobalt supply chain;
3. Increase food security and family income through alternative livelihoods;
4. Decrease gender-based discrimination and violence through social, political and economic empowerment of women and girls.



*"It's no fun going into the mine.  
But that work is finished for me now!  
Now I study. Now, I'm doing well.  
At Good Shepherds I learned that children  
have rights and that all children are born equal."*

**Morgan**, 8 year old  
Child Protection Program, Kolwezi (DRC)

### Project summary

The aim of the GSS multi-annual program is to help break the cycle of violence and abuse preying on the children, girls and women in the artisanal mining community of Domain Marial (Kolwezi). Specifically, the aim is to improve the living conditions of 900 children, 80 teenage girls, 200+ women and their families. The project promotes the equitable participation of these vulnerable groups in society, responds to their immediate needs and also redresses the structural inequalities that perpetuate the cycle of violence and poverty.

The intergenerational transfer of poverty and violence that traps girls and children in these communities can only be interrupted through a multi-dimensional approach that includes social protection, service provisions, community mobilization, alternative livelihoods and lobbying to implement existing laws and facilitate social transformation.

# Activities and results

Through a participatory consultation that involved all community members, the program is developing four main activity areas that currently serve more than 5,000 people.



## 1 Farming project: generating alternative income and food security for ex-miners

The project provides technical training in agricultural and animal husbandry to community members offering them an alternative livelihood to the unsafe mining work. Thanks to the Maisha Farm coop, created by 47 project members, 118 families involved have improved their year-round food security. As of 2016, the farming yield covers 100% of their yearly subsistence needs. Moreover, 89% of the women who joined the cooperative could afford to quit the mines, an exploitative and unsafe environment for them. The project has recently expanded its operation to an additional two sites in the community of Mwanza and Kanina, providing training and tools for agribusiness to about 100 women.

- ✓ **1,134** children are protected, nourished and educated
- ✓ **91%** of target children quit work in the mines

- ✓ **193** children reintegrated into the formal school system

- ✓ **29,000+** children vaccinated in the area

- ✓ **300** women gained skills for alternative livelihood and improved their income

- ✓ **300** girls received vocational training to access dignified jobs

- ✓ **93%** of people who joined to Maisha Farm Coop have vastly improved their food security

- ✓ **89%** of women are no longer involved in unsafe work in the mines.



## 2 Skills training and economic empowerment project

The skills training program enrolled 160 girls and 65 women. Each had been engaged in unsafe jobs in the mines; many were forced into commercial sexual exploitation there. The girls trained at the Economic Empowerment Center in competency-based tailoring skill development and in catering/food production now earn an income - an average \$180 per month. Many now use their earnings to pay for their school exams. Furthermore, the project provides community sensitization activities on gender equity, sexual health and women's rights and offers family counselling and support to victims of abuse/violence.



## 3 Education and Child Protection project

The program provides access to informal education and school feeding, plus supports the reintegration of children into the formal school system and has established an unprecedented and effective informal reporting system to pursue the abuse of children occurring within the community. Over 1,100 children (all of them Orphans or Vulnerable and engaged in different forms of work in the ASM) have been enrolled in the program and 91% of them have opted to stop working as a result. The children receive 1 meal per day; the rate of malnutrition has decreased to less than 4%. A total of 193 children were reintegrated into the formal school system and are monitored to ensure continued participation. The Centre functions as a referral centre for abuses on children and women and has assisted in the prosecution of over 70 cases of corporal punishment, neglect, sexual abuse and early arranged and forced marriage. The Centre has worked intensely to prevent violence and human rights abuses within the community through home visits, education on child protection and positive parenting, counselling and psycho-social support to the families.



## 4 Civic Strengthening and Community mobilization project

A solid group of 1,294 women, 625 girls and 7 men are regularly involved in human rights awareness raising, that includes advocacy work and lobbying the local Government and mining companies for better living conditions. The voices of women were broadcasted widely recently when they participated in a radio program promoting education and the end of child marriage. The lobbying effort with government officials has already produced results, including the installation of a new generator (benefitting 5,000 households), the construction of 5 schools (1,500 children) and the digging of a well (3,000 residents).

### NO CHILDREN IN ARTISANAL MINING

*Our program in Kolwezi, thanks to the tangible impact its having on the lives of thousands of artisanal miners and on the quality of the management systems in place, is considered a good practice for eradication of child labour in the ASM on a local and national level. Columbia University is leading a research to document Good Shepherd's child protection model for replication.*

### THE FILM "MAISHA: A NEW LIFE OUTSIDE THE MINES"

*The Good Shepherd International Foundation produced the film "Maisha: A New Life Outside the Mines" documenting the living conditions of the artisanal mining community in Kolwezi and the impact that this community development project is having. The film was screened in 10 human rights film festivals across 3 continents, and was awarded prizes including best short film at the Vaasa Film Festival in Finland and at the Human Rights Film Festival in Barcelona.*

[www.maishafilm.com](http://www.maishafilm.com)