



Dynamics of oppression and state failure

*Cases of child labour in artisanal and small-scale mines  
Democratic Republic of Congo*

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## *Dedication*

To all children and child labourers worldwide:  
you are the future of the world, and so the planet's greatest natural resource  
(Vonnegut, 1985:170)

## *Acknowledgements*

This work was conceived among thousands complications and it found the precious support of so many people that another thesis would be necessary to acknowledge them all as much as they deserve.

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## *Abstract*

This thesis deals with child labour in artisanal and small scale mines in two case studies: Kalima and Kampene in the Province of Maniema, Democratic Republic of Congo. The objectives of this paper have been formulated in the form of three research questions which investigate the working conditions of child miners, their self-perception, and the consequences of the lack of a functioning state for child miners.

The paper used a qualitative approach employing multiple-methods such as interviews, observation, and audio-visual material with a supporting role.

After a description of the working conditions, schedules, and tasks of children in the artisanal mining sites, the thesis focuses on the analysis of the self-perception of children following Rossatto's "Freirean Mapping of Optimism and Desire". Through this model, four attitudes among child miners have been identified: antagonism, fatalistic optimism, resilient optimism, and transformative optimism. Combining the theoretical model and the empirical data gathered during fieldwork, it has been possible to give an explanation of the attitudes that children have towards their working environment and more in general towards their situation as "oppressed group". Consequently, employing Freire's theory of oppression, it was possible to analyse the answers of child miners concerning their future. Through this theoretical framework, my interviewees among child miners in Kalima and Kampene can mostly be described as in a pre-*conscientização* phase, in which they still do not perceive their status of oppressed, but they rather tend to empathize with their oppressors.

Finally, employing the theory of failed states, it was possible to identify the consequences of the lack of a functioning state on child miners, namely: lack of future critical intellectuals (with direct repercussion on the country's future), dehumanization, powerlessness, marginalization, and inversion of roles.

The thesis concludes with some final remarks and future implications for both research as well as practice.

Key words: Child labour, mining, working conditions, oppression, failed states, Democratic Republic of Congo, *conscientização*.

## ***List of Acronyms***

ADR = Action de détraumatisation et réconciliation  
AFDL = Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre  
APEMA = Association pour la Promotion de l'Éducation au Maniema  
ASDI = Association Sportif de Développement Intégré  
ASM = Artisanal and Small-scale Mines  
AU = African Union  
CAB = Comité Anti-Bwaki  
COOPI = Cooperazione Internazionale  
CPD = Comité Parrocel pour le développement  
CPI = Corruption Perception Index  
CRC = Committee on the Rights of the Children  
CTLVS = Commission Territoriale de Lutte contre les Violences Sexuelles  
DHPI = Denis Hurley Peace Institute  
DRC = Democratic Republic of Congo  
FC = Francs Congolaises  
GDP = Gross Domestic Product  
GEMICO = Générale des Mines du Congo  
GTZ = Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit  
HDI = Human Development Index  
ILO = International Labour Organisation  
IMF = International Monetary Fund  
INGOs = International Non-Governmental Organisations  
IPEC = International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour  
ISC = Institut Supérieur de Commerce  
ISDR = Institut Supérieur pour le Développement Rurale  
ISTAT = Istituto nazionale di statistica  
MNCs = Multi National Corporations  
MONUC = Mission des Nations Unies au République Démocratique du Congo  
NAI = Nordic Africa Institute  
NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation  
NSD = Norwegian Social Science Data Services  
OCHA = Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
PEDER = Programme d'Encadrement des Enfants de la Rue  
SAKIMA = Société Aurifère du Kivu et Maniema  
SIPRI = Stockholm International Peace Research Institute  
SOMINKI = Société Minière du Kivu  
UML = Université du Moyen Lualaba  
UN = United Nations  
UNDP = United Nations Development Programme  
UNICEF = United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund  
USA = United States of America

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on child labour in the Artisanal and Small-scale Mines (ASM) of the villages of Kalima (cassiterite mine) and Kampene (gold mine of Kiabombua)<sup>1</sup> in the Province of Maniema, in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Today more than ever, it is necessary to examine in depth the growing problematic issue of child labour which involves both developed and developing countries and is not a new phenomenon, but rather the unwelcome resurgence of an old phenomenon. Indeed, child employment in the mining industry already existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in coal mines in the United Kingdom (Rose, 1991)<sup>2</sup>.

However, if we try to compare the contemporary situation of child miners to that of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, we could notice how the gravity of this practice is somehow accentuated nowadays. This is because it deliberately breaches human rights and takes place in a legal framework which includes laws for child protection (and mining regulation) which did not exist in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, child labour nowadays provokes additional poverty and exploitation, rather than leading to a process of revolution and establishment of the basis of a better future for forthcoming generations, especially children.

Mining, which is classified as one of the worst forms of child labour, is so at odds with children's rights that it must be eliminated as soon as possible. The activity carried out in the mines is promiscuous and "threatens health, safety, and moral development of children interfering with their intellectual development by preventing their attendance and effective participation in school" (United States Department of Labour, 2005)<sup>3</sup>. In fact, despite the patchy statistical and official reports on school attendance, the rate of school withdrawals in mineral rich provinces of DRC (such as Maniema) is remarkable. This has been ascertained by interviewees who have firsthand experience in the educational sector and by the National Institute of Statistics and its local *bureaux*. Moreover, due to the hazardous working environment and to the lack of any safety measure, the incidence of mine-related accidents and illnesses is high.

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<sup>1</sup> Kampene is the name of the village, whilst Kiabombua is the name of the mining site. In the thesis these names will be used indistinctly to refer to the same gold mine, mainly for avoiding redundancy.

<sup>2</sup> In 1861, the census indicated that among boys, 55-60% of the 10-14 year-olds were in occupations and in the same age range, 31,000 out of 247,000 coal miners were children. For girls 10-14 years, 50% were employed, especially in domestic services and textiles (Rose 1991:3).

<sup>3</sup> The definition is given by the ILO Convention 138.

Along with this first issue, there is a second reason for undertaking research in this field: investigations done on this theme often focused on the causes and consequences of child labour leaving aside the perspective from inside that is what children perceive, think, feel, and understand. From this, the need that I, in my thesis, felt to deal with an often forgotten voice: that of the children, to whose perceptions a section of this work is devoted.

A further issue in which this thesis finds a driving reason, is the perverse, illegal and hidden trade in minerals. This trade, which uses child labour and tramples on children's rights is insignificant in terms of local development or creation of a better future; instead, it aims at enriching foreign actors<sup>4</sup>, as underlined by an interviewee, a local Missionary in Kalima:

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*“Children don't earn anything if considering the real value of cassiterite, gold and coltan [...]. All these wars and all that is made up, and I underline made up, in my opinion, it is to distract the population, [...] for taking advantage and exploit the different minerals that obviously go to foreign countries. Benefits for local people: zero... .. zero”.*

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In fact, the deplorable way in which the mineral trade is carried out, does not generate local wealth, neither among adult miners, nor among child-miners and their families which are oppressed and trapped into poverty. The mineral trade turns out to be a sort of organized, brutal activity orchestrated for the enrichment of others at the expenses of children's lives, rights, and future. Indeed, the mineral-stemmed wealth goes to foreign and non-foreign pockets, to state and non-state actors, and it is often used to fuel endless conflict as in the case of Eastern DRC. This is made possible by a non-functioning State unable to regulate this trade, unable to safeguard citizens, and to ensure children's wellbeing as explained by the Director of the Denis Hurlay Peace Institute (DHPI) of Pretoria:

*“M<sup>5</sup> – Ok, there's an international involvement but there must be a national involvement as well otherwise....  
S – Of course there's a national involvement; the international involvement begins at a national level in order to give those people access, even just documentation access [...] And then the situation comes at the provincial level, then there are people buffered on that level and then at local level...”*

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Given this central role played by the State, the theme of child labour in ASM will be accompanied by an analysis of the consequences of the non-functioning Congolese state, which, as my research has shown, is the first actor to blame for the perpetuation of this reprehensible situation.

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<sup>4</sup> The term foreign in this context has to be understood in its wide sense. It is not limited to those who live outside the country's geographical borders, but it refers also to those extraneous actors (state and non-state-actors) which manage the trade from the inside for their own personal benefit.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the whole thesis, “M” stands for “me”.

Finally, it is crucial to stress that child labour in ASM represents an important facet of the current Congolese unstable political situation and of the historical heritage of the country. However, despite the existing connections with these topics, this thesis will neither deal with the present-day conflict in the DRC nor with the past history of the country. However, to better comprehend the context, a thorough study of the history of the DRC has been carried out consulting relevant volumes, such as Braeckman's Les Nouveaux Predateurs (2003), Kanza's Conflict in the Congo (1972), and various reports (UN, UNICEF, US, CIA, etc...).

The objectives of this thesis are three: first of all, to describe the working conditions of child miners explaining the working methods, organization, and schedule, giving empirical evidence through the use of some pictures collected during fieldwork.

The second objective is to explore children's perception of their work and their situation employing the theory of oppression and its aspects as outlined by Freire (1972), Young (1990), and Rossatto (2005).

The third objective is to identify the consequences of the non-functioning Congolese state which has been classified as a failed state by several scientists such as Zartman (1995), Herbst (2000), and Rotberg (2004).

### ***1.1. Research Questions***

I will attempt to answer three research questions that are open-ended in an attempt to allow a detailed exploration of factors and issues that emerged during the research process (Holliday, 2002:33). Black (1999a) classified research questions in different categories, such as predictive, descriptive, explorative, explanatory, for control (ibid.:31,32), according to what they want to answer. The three research questions that this thesis will attempt to answer are both descriptive and explorative. Descriptive because they illustrate the working conditions of children in the mining sites, and explorative because they investigate the perception that children have of themselves as child labourers also analysing the consequences of the absence of a functioning State. Since this research chose a case-study approach which aims at explaining, describing, and illustrating the situations studied, the research questions have been formulated in order to better fit these requirements, and they are:

1. Which are the working conditions of children employed in the artisanal and small-scale mines of Kalima and Kampene in Eastern DRC?
2. Which is the self-perception of child miners?
3. What are the consequences of the absence of a functioning State for child-miners?

## ***1.2. Relation to Peace & Conflict Studies***

*If we are to have real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with the children.* (Mohandas Gandhi)

I would like the readers to consider abolition of all the worst forms of child labour as one ring of the long chain of “positive peace”. Galtung (1996) defined positive peace as integral peace which includes mutual aid and cooperation (direct peace), development, peaceful coexistence, solidarity and freedom (structural peace), democracy and human rights (cultural peace). Positive peace includes the elimination of all forms of violence such as cultural violence, direct violence of individuals acting singly or collectively who carry out intended acts of violence towards people, and structural violence which is built into the person, social and world spaces. Structural violence can take diverse forms such as political repression, economic exploitation supported by structural penetration, segmentation, fragmentation and marginalization (Galtung, 1996:31). Such acts of violence are also taking place in the mines and have been denounced by a psychologist specialized in the field of women and child abuse who works with a local NGO:

*“This is a form of violence because the rights of the child are violated. The place of the child is not in the mines doing hard jobs, his place is in the school Now try to imagine the consequences of his employment in the mines: he will be un-educated, he will start drinking, buying drugs, etc...”*

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Hence, considering positive peace as a long chain composed of small pieces, this thesis argues that if in DRC children are not freed from the trap of the worst forms of child labour, one ring of the chain will be missing, and the path towards the establishment of a long-lasting, enduring, sustainable, and integral positive peace will be compromised.

## ***1.3. Structure of the Thesis.***

The structure of the thesis is as follows. This first chapter has an introductory character and outlines the research topic, its motives, aims, and its relation to Peace and Conflict Studies. The second chapter illustrates the methodological approach with particular attention to the ethical considerations and the methods for data production. The third chapter analyses the theoretical framework, explaining the theories which supply the foundations of this research, namely the theory of oppression and the theory of failed states.

The fourth chapter discusses the core topic of this paper: working conditions of children in artisanal and small-scale mines of Kalima and Kampene, self-perception of children and consequences the failed State. The last chapter draws conclusions.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The general approach chosen for this research is a qualitative one. Qualitative methods allowed to go deeper into the research problem providing a more profound understanding of the social phenomenon investigated (Silverman, 2005:10). Through qualitative research I tried to generate a more detailed view of the situation, getting closer to the actors' perspectives aimed at developing "as full an understanding of the case as possible" (Punch, 1998:150).

From this, the decision to adopt a case study strategy, as has been widely done in small-scale social projects investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context and natural occurring environment, thereby giving a unitary character to the data (Denscombe, 2003:30; Punch, 1998:150; Yin, 2009:18). Case-studies analyse in detail a circumscribed social phenomenon, pursuing issues to a greater depth, capturing the complexity of single real-life cases. Stake writes that case studies aim towards particularization rather than generalization:

*"We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does, [...] the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself"* (Stake, 1995:8).

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Hence, this paper does not aim at statistical generalizations or at finding "the answer" to the issue of child labour, but it wants to discuss this phenomenon through two theoretical perspectives, theory of oppression and failed states, that will be better outlined in chapter 3.

Finally, the usefulness and the credibility of generalizations of case studies have been criticized since they are often perceived as producing "soft data" (Denscombe, 2003:39) and thus, suitable only for an exploratory phase of an investigation. In accordance with Yin, who questions this view, this thesis deems case studies to be a suitable method for any phase of the research, whether exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (Yin, 2009:6,8).

### 2.1. Dealing with Complex Emergency Situation

The DRC is one of the fifteen countries labelled as a complex emergency and conflict situation (OCHA, 2009:80)<sup>6</sup> in which the distinction between combatants and civilians, adults and children vanishes and there are some disturbing effects, such as:

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<sup>6</sup> ReliefWeb (<http://www.reliefweb.int>) and the International Rescue Committee defined Congo as one of the world's worst and most forsaken humanitarian crises. See: International Rescue Committee, 2009 from URL: <http://www.theirc.org/where/congo> [18th October 2009].

*“the use of child soldiers and forced conscription, the widespread [...] criminalization of economic life – including the trafficking of humans, drugs and arms – and, in some conflicts, prevalent sexual assault [...]”* (Bøås et al., 2006:72).

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As Bøås (2006) points out, there are two main factors in the causation and continuation of complex conflicts; these are resources, mainly natural resources, and “the changing nature of government and the state”. The DRC is a typical case of this and therefore, research carried out in this context has to deal with a high degree of insecurity due to economic, cultural, religious and environmental dynamics that are present on the field (Bøås et al., 2006:76).

As I conducted my fieldwork in DRC, I did my best to avoid situations that could place me in danger. Therefore, all choices regarding methods and methodological approaches have been taken according to their feasibility in the above described context. Hence, methods were flexible and mainly emerged from the social setting in which the fieldwork took place and from the continuous evolution of the research questions (Holliday, 2002:21).

## ***2.2. Methods for Data Production***

For this research, I employed a multiple-method approach that allowed me to collect a variety of data adaptable to the often changing settings. However, the variety of research methods used will not be able to cover exhaustively all aspects of the research (Scott, 2000:188). An extensive literature review was carried out, consulting books, documents and other type of written material provided by various institutions. In addition to a comprehensive reading, the methods I used were interviews, direct observation, and visual data.

### ***2.2.1 Interviews***

This thesis used one-to-one personal interviews with open-ended and in-depth questions (Keeter, 2005). This type of questions allowed all respondents<sup>7</sup> to talk freely about a problem in their own words and it was therefore possible to gather their detailed perspectives on the issue. In-depth interviewing turned out to be an excellent tool to learn the meanings of participants’ answers and it allowed me to penetrate the social situation I was studying. This method helped the deep understandings of the topic, as well as to balance the power differential between me (interviewer) and children (interviewees). In this respect, informants – who were mainly children – assumed the role of *teachers* and I became a *student* “interested in learning and gaining knowledge from the informants” (Johnson, 2002:106). In-depth

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<sup>7</sup>The research focused on three classes of respondents: children, key informants (NGOs officers, professors, missionaries, politicians, etc...), and mine owners. as I will describe in more detail in section 2.5.

interviews also allowed me to grasp multiple views, perspectives and meanings related to the treated topic that I would have not been able to capture without using this method. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that I had an interview guide (Annex 4) to follow but I was highly flexible in terms of order and development of the questions (Denscombe, 2003:167; Yin, 2009:107).

Another interview method, which is likely to bring up interesting points for discussion, is group interviewing. I did not organize group interviews as I considered them to be very hard to arrange, especially in the chaotic mining context. Since children tended to copy answers from one another (even during one-to-one interviews), I doubted that during group interviews each child would have been able to express his ideas spontaneously. However, due to the high level of socialization in the mines, I sometimes interviewed two/three children at the same time (usually brothers) with at least 20 listeners around us. Nonetheless, whenever possible, I tried to carry out interviews in *sheltered* spots so as to enhance each child's openness.

### **2.2.2. Observation**

*Researchers who fail to use their eyes and ears risk to miss an important piece of information.* (Silverman, 2005:176)

Observation is a research technique widely used in social sciences and it consists in recording what people do rather than what they say they do<sup>8</sup>. There are two main types of observation, systematic and participant observation. The former is a structured way of observing and usually aims at collecting quantitative data, whilst the latter is an unstructured method that does not use predetermined categories and makes observation "open-ended" with the objective of producing qualitative data (Punch, 1998:178). Observation during my fieldwork in DRC took the shape of unstructured direct observation in which I was fully immersed in the context I was observing, and people were informed on my identity and purposes. All the perceptions, ideas, remarks, and feelings I had during fieldwork have been written down (and sometimes recorded) in a field diary that became very useful at the stage of the thesis editing. However, observation risks being very broad and not research-oriented if all the events occurring around the researcher are taken into consideration, hence, I made use of the most relevant information relating it to the research questions (Black, 1999b:22).

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<sup>8</sup> However, mere observation bears some disadvantages since it focuses on what happens and not on what the intentions were that motivated a certain behaviour.

Similarly to case studies, critiques on this type of data gathering method abound as well, underlining that it is a non-reliable method, mainly because biased by the observer's perception. Nevertheless, I used this technique because it allowed me to gather important information of the culture and the sub-culture of the milieu I was studying, providing valuable 'background' material useful once I went back to my home country and had to start writing (Silverman, 2005:111). Furthermore, I consider observation to be the most suitable method to be combined with interviews in the multiple-method approach, since it helped me to "capture fully the richness of human experience" (Eder and Fingerson, 2002:188).

### ***2.2.3. Audio-Visual Material***

Interviews and observation were the primary ways of gathering data, whilst audio-visual material was used for providing a visual impression in addition to the text. Visual material is a broad category and can be very complicated, hence, as regards this thesis, it included photographs and audio/video recordings.

I limited the use of pictures to a support role, meaning that they will serve to give to the reader a better understanding of the situation of the children in the mining sites, showing empirical and visual evidence of the working conditions, enhancing comprehension.

The videos of children addressing their president have been put together in a short-movie. This video needs to be understood as an independent work that is not object of the present analysis, but that is meant for peace education activities, rather than for this specific academic research. It can however be consulted for a limited period of time, until September 2010, at this link provided by the Department of Visual and Cultural Studies of the University of Tromsø: [http://www.sv.uit.no/buch/film\\_end\\_mix\\_F9\\_FastStart\\_768K.swf](http://www.sv.uit.no/buch/film_end_mix_F9_FastStart_768K.swf)

## ***2.3. Fieldwork***

This thesis is the final product of three months of fieldwork in the DRC. The fieldwork took place from June 2009 to August 2009 and it had the logistic and institutional support of many NGOs and organisations both in Italy as well as in the DRC. The Italian NGO Incontro fra i Popoli represented the launch pad for this experience since they paved my way for the contacts with local Congolese NGOs and institutions, namely: APEMA, ASDI, UML, SAKIMA, CAB, and PEDER<sup>9</sup>. The fieldwork started from Kinshasa, the capital city, I then

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<sup>9</sup> For full explanation see the list of acronyms.



moved to Kindu (capital of the province of Maniema), which served as a logistic base for my transfers to the mining sites of Kalima and Kampene.

The field experience showed me a high degree of oppression, marginalization and a tendency to powerlessness and fatalism in children. I will later link my fieldwork experience to a theoretical framework which covers the theory of oppression and the failure of the Congolese State in providing a safe and stimulating environment for its young people. Actually, the state exercises a certain degree of violence towards children and gives up the *de facto* powers to non-state actors (both private companies as well as rebel armed groups), leaving the most fragile part of the population, children, by themselves without any protection or assurance of a better future.

#### ***2.4. Hitches: How did I go about resolving them?***

During my fieldwork, I came across some difficulties that subtly affected my research, thus, I would like to give a description of the complications I found.

Language: In the area where I conducted my research the main language is Swahili and many people do not speak French. This especially concerns children who do not go to school or attend local schools where teaching is in Swahili. Hence, all communication required translators with a consequent inevitable loss of details<sup>10</sup>.

Nationality and gender: Being a white European woman affected my research since, on some occasions, it was hard for me to hear and be heard. As Silverman notes, in some cases “women are precluded from participating in many activities or asking many questions” (Silverman, 2005:264). This was particularly strong in the inland rural communities I visited where authority is reserved to male figures. Hence, I employed male translators who were men known at the local level. Nevertheless, this choice holds a further complication since there is the possibility that my translators altered semantics if considering answers harmful for the reputation of the country, or inappropriate for a woman.

Transports: The means of transport were limited and the road system is in very bad conditions, as one of my respondents illustrated in the following quote:

*“[...] routes are impassable... it is so dangerous to travel no matter how, motorbikes, cars, bikes, it's always a danger to go on a journey”.*

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This affected both my research and my daily life (tiredness, expenditure of time, insecurity).

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<sup>10</sup> Everything was translated twice: from Swahili to French and from French to English.

Mining context: Mines were hard to reach and military road-blockades were usual. In order to be admitted to the mines, I travelled with a recommendation letter written by a local Deputy (Annex 3). Once in the mines, interviews were complicated to carry out due to background noises; this affected the quality of recordings and the level of attention of my respondents. Furthermore, since mining is a delicate and insecure context, some children felt inhibited from freely expressing their thoughts.

Economic constraint: Money shortages represented an obstacle since transportation, field and living costs were high<sup>11</sup>. Because of this, I found myself without enough money to visit other interesting mining sites.

Finally, the burning of my personal laptop taught me the need for the typically African capacity of *débrouillardise*, “coping with unpredictability” (Waage, 2006:62).

## **2.5. Participants**

For the sake of clarity, I divided my respondents in three groups: children, experts, and key-actors. The first category is self-explanatory and refers to child-miners. The category “experts” includes a set of people who have firsthand experience and/or deep knowledge of the situation of children in the artisanal mining sites and of the Congolese setting. Finally, “key actors” are those who are somehow involved, directly or indirectly, institutionally or informally, with the employment of children in the artisanal mining sites. Since the main focus of this thesis is the first hand experiences of the children, they were the principal group of participants, whilst information from experts and key actors assumed a supplementary role.

### **2.5.1. Children**

*“The child has the right to express his or her views, to obtain information and to impart information and ideas, regardless of frontiers”.* (United Nations CRC, 2000:art. 13)

Since “the best people to provide information on the child’s perspective and attitudes are children themselves” (Scott, 2000:99) young miners (7-17) assumed a strategic role in this thesis, and were the largest group of interviewees, with a total of 46 child-miners divided as follows:

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<sup>11</sup>Costs refer to translation expenses, gasoline, tolls and tips, food, drinking water, hygiene-related items, etc.

Mine	Age 7-10	Age 11-14	Age 15-18	Total
Kalima	1	1	4	6
Kampene	6	21	13	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>46</b>

While carrying out the interviews, I found out that child labour in the mining sector is mainly a male activity. In fact, 44 interviewees were boys: I only met two girls, one was selling food and the other was an occasional miner. This shows that child labour in the mines is a gendered issue.

As can be seen from the table, the majority of interviewed children were below 15 years old highlighting that mining is a “young-child activity”, perhaps because it requires small and tiny bodies for several tasks. The interviews were mainly carried out in the mornings before work or exactly during working hours. To make children at ease with the interview (for all of them it was the first time being recorded, photographed, etc...), I started with *warming-up questions* (i.e. What’s your name?<sup>12</sup> How old are you? Where do you come from? Do you go to school?). This chitchat appeared to be very useful for creating a more intimate, harmonious, and trustful relationship, and it was completed by reciprocity<sup>13</sup>. As soon as children became more comfortable with the interview and with me, I started with more sensitive questions ensuring the confidentiality of the responses. In-depth questions allowed children “to give voice to their own thoughts, rather than rely on adult interpretation of their lives” (Eder and Fingerson, 2002:181).

Before starting, I was worried of having cases of “non-response”, as Silverman noted to be a common attitude among adolescents, especially when dealing with adults and when questioned about sensitive topics (2005:166). In this research, non-response occurred on rare occasions and the majority of children ended up answering when encouraged to reflect upon the question. Children were anyway told they could refrain from answering if they did not feel comfortable with it, and this created a more relaxed environment without generating performance anxiety.

Children, and youths in general, tend to lose concentration easily, especially in distracting contexts such as the mines. In order to involve child miners as much as possible in the research process, I used inclusive methods to enhance their active participation. Face-to-face

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<sup>12</sup> Names were neither recorded, nor used, as they do not represent relevant information for the purpose of this research. I only asked the names to establish a personal contact with children during interview.

<sup>13</sup> Reciprocity refers to giving something back to the interviewees in order to compensate power imbalance (Eder and Fingerson 2002:185). For this research, I interpreted reciprocity as personal disclosures during the interviews, for example when children said they were good in math, I replied that I was very bad at that subject in school, etc.

interviews were combined with two activities that stimulated children's interests: drawings of the mining sites and video-messages to the President of the DRC. These participatory techniques were employed for removing obstacles linked to discretion and for gaining my respondents' confidence, ensuring a more trustful environment. Specifically, for this last objective, some children who had already finished the interview were allowed to take the camera and record their friends' video-message. Children liked this very much and felt truly taken into account and worthy of trust. The tools of drawings and videos have a support role and were mainly used to liven up the interview, and improve children's participation. They have not been included in the analysis since they are part of the audio-visual material which is limited to a support role, as explained in section 2.2.3.

A chart of the interviewed children was drawn to improve the accuracy of the study and included information such as: family composition, school attendance, consciousness of child labourer's situation, payment for entering the mine, etc. The tool of the chart gave the possibility to compare the different cases, seeing similarities and differences.

Despite the opportunities given by researching with and on children, some difficulties were encountered in addition to those discussed in section 2.4.

The first limit concerns "children's language use, literacy, and different stages of cognitive development" (Scott, 2000:100). This influenced the final quality of data since some questions were not well understood or were partially answered. This was also due to my personal impossibility to address better explanations directly to the child.

Secondly, some children were little motivated to participate actively in the interviews since no rewards had been offered despite their requests (food, money, clothes, pens, etc.). Consequently, children's level of attention was fluctuating: they asked to repeat questions, they did not answer the question asked, or their answers tended to be short and non-detailed, as in these extracts referring to interviews with children in the gold mine of Kiabombua:

*M – Are you many in the family?*

*C<sup>14</sup> – I lost my parents.*

*M – What about siblings?*

*C – We're 2.*

*M – Hence there's you and another one?*

*C – Yes.*

*[The child is very inattentive and keeps looking at the other buddies around him].*

*M – [addressing to my translator] Please Chance, tell him to pay attention to me and look at me even though I'm not so beautiful...*

*[My translator translates and everybody laughs].*

*[Child miner, 9 - Kampene]*

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<sup>14</sup> Throughout the whole thesis, "C" stands for child.

Another example is the following:

*M – How old are you?*

*C – I'm 12.*

*M – How long have you been working here?*

*C – 8 years.*

*[...]*

*M – Who do you live with?*

*C – I come here to the pit, I look for a bit of gold...*

*M – No, no, I asked you who do you live with?*

*C – Ah, ... ehm.... with my brothers.*

*[Child miner, 16 - Kampene]*

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A third difficulty refers to the context in which interviews took place since it played a crucial role and influenced the way children responded (Scott, 2000:103). Eder and Fingerson (2002:183) underline the importance of creating a natural context for the interview for minimizing “the power differential between the researcher and those being studied”. In the mines, it was impossible to prepare a suitable interviewing environment or to fix the site for children to feel at ease. Mining authorities did not allow it and the mine itself was not suitable for such arrangements. The sole thing I could do was to walk with the child a bit further from the extracting area where noises were reduced.

Finally, a limit that has been often encountered while researching children is their reliability. Children tended to use victim images trying to create “a platform for both social (re)acceptance and socio-economic possibilities” (Utas, 2005:409). Utas uses the term “victimcy” in the context of child soldiers to define a victim behaviour as “a form of narrative that structures the presentation of self in particular ways” (ibid.). I experienced this, for instance, when some child-miners made up stories which they perceived as more desirable for me as white foreign researcher<sup>15</sup> in order to get some sort of special recognition or rewards for their information. The following *presentation of self* given by a child miner can represent an example of “victimcy”:

*M – How old are you?*

*C – I'm 10.*

*M – Ehm...are you sure? You look older, come on you are older [smiling at the child and trying to convince him to tell me the truth].*

*Translator – ..... He declares he's 10.*

*[...]*

*M – Do you go to school?*

*C – Yes, I'm in 2<sup>nd</sup> secondary.*

*M – It's impossible. If you're 10 you cannot already be in secondary school...*

*Translator – There's something wrong here...You cheated on us [directed to the child]. You're not 10.*

---

<sup>15</sup> This will be explained in more depth in section 2.6.

*C – I am 10!*

*M – Listen dear, it's impossible. You start primary school at 6 years old so you can be at maximum in 5<sup>th</sup> primary...So please, tell me the truth. Why did you lie to me? You know there's no right or wrong answer, just tell me your age...there are no problems, even if you're 25 it's fine...just tell me the truth.*

*[Lively discussion in Swahili between my translator and the child]*

*C – I'm 16...*

*M – Why did you lie, what was the problem?*

*C – I was scared and did not know what you preferred.*

*[Child miner, 16 - Kampene]*

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From this extract it is possible to notice how the child created a “victim image” for fear of not being accepted by me. This kind of information reflects “victimcy” and needs to be understood in the interaction context within which the research was made.

### **2.5.2. Experts**

In the second group, respondents were purposefully chosen to represent a set of experts with knowledge and experience on the topic of child labour, mining, and Congolese State capacity. Experts who provided me with useful information on the topic were people working in different environments such as: local and international NGOs, missions, education facilities (from primary schools up to university level, as well as private institutes), local, regional and state organizations (National Office of Statistics, Provincial Parliament).

### **2.5.3. Key Actors**

The last group is composed of those I define as key actors, meaning people who are somehow involved with the employment of children in the artisanal mining sites. Among them the Minister of Economy, Mines, and Energy of the Province of Maniema, the Mining Committee of the Mine of Kiabombua (in Kampene), mining-police commandant, and the vice-president of SAKIMA, one of the biggest mining companies in the DRC.

## **2.6. Interviewing children: An Ethical Challenge.**

*“The belief that research should not harm children needs to be tempered by a different sensibility, one that recognizes that it may be oppressive and unethical not to invite children to aid research”.*  
(Darbyshire, 2000:2)

Research on children in the environment of the mines in Eastern DRC poses practical, methodological and ethical challenges. Hence, this research has been developed in

compliance with the ethical guidelines of the “National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities”<sup>16</sup> and it has been reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, which inserted the project in its database<sup>17</sup>. Several ethical considerations have been taken into account especially because my principal informants were children under the age of 18.

The first ethical aspect was the obtainment of a free informed consent and the voluntary participation of my informants. Before establishing any contact with children, I was introducing myself, explaining the purpose of my visit in order to allow them to have “a reasonable understanding of the field of research, of the consequences of participating in the research project, and of the purpose of the research” (NESH, 2009:12). I always asked the authorization for participating in the interview, giving to informants the right to freely choose whether “to subject themselves to the scrutiny inherent in research” (Dane, 1990:39), or not (Broome and Stieglitz, 1992). This meant that the child had to decide to take part in the research process free from any constraint, without being obliged, bribed or offered any rewards in exchange for his participation. As a further way of safeguarding participants, written agreement could accompany verbal consent, but in the case of child miners in the mines in DRC, I found it inappropriate, and even counter-productive. Requiring a written consent would have created distance between the children and me, increasing the level of my authority, and making children uncomfortable (some of them did not know how to read or write). Hence, I only asked verbal authorization for participating in the interview, for taping conversations, and take pictures (Gokah, 2006:68). Since many child-miners were orphans, or in charge of relatives not present in the mining site, my research was exempted from the rule of obtaining the consent of parents when researching youth under 15. This permission was obtained through the registration at the NSD.

The second ethical consideration concerns the principle of “do no harm”. Do no harm refers to minimizing risks, ensuring that “the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort of the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered by the respondent in daily life” (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2005:45 CFR 46.102). Do no harm is an ethical dilemma that arises in all research involving children and is particularly accentuated in those researches that deal with minors already affected by dramatic experiences, such as the mining context. It follows therefore that there are different types of

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<sup>16</sup> For more information on NESH see URL: <http://www.etikkom.no/en/In-English/Committee-for-Research-Ethics-in-the-Social-Sciences-and-the-Humanities/>

<sup>17</sup> Prosjektnummer: 21637. For more information on NSD see URL: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>

harm, not only physical, but also mental and emotional that are unpredictable and which a researcher is more likely to run into (Neill, 2005:51). These kinds of dangers need to be understood both in the short-run (e.g. if a child starts crying while interviewed), as well as in the long-run (e.g. if a child feels downcast and sad even after the end of the research). Bøås (2006:75) argues that “do no harm” should always be a priority in every contact with informants in order to secure and protect them and I tried my best to comply with this. For instance, when touching sensitive themes (loss of parents, visible injuries, etc ...), I explicitly emphasized that the respondent was free to answer or not.

This research employed techniques which have an introspective character with a tendency to lead interviewees to disclose personal information. In order to ensure safety to my respondents, I took into consideration a third ethical aspect: confidentiality and anonymity. The open-ended interviews made participants “particularly vulnerable to invasion of privacy, unwanted identification, breach of confidentiality and trust” (Peled and Leichtentritt, 2002:150) and I tried to ensure privacy during and after fieldwork<sup>18</sup> avoiding relating the “informant’s identity to any information pertaining to the project”<sup>19</sup> (Dane, 1990:151).

The fourth ethical consideration I took into account was towards the public to which I have to deliver a correct, honest and true version of the reality (American Anthropological Association, 1971:art.2). The public includes all readers, students and other colleagues in the field of Social Sciences and more specifically Peace and Conflict Studies, and the governments I worked within (home country and host countries<sup>20</sup>) towards whom I tried to be as candid and fair as possible, attempting to give a “non-exploitative and committed” representation of my academic work (American Anthropological Association, 1971:art.4).

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<sup>18</sup> Confidentiality included not reporting private data identifying children throughout the whole research process from the design of the research, to the interview and the transcription till the final report (Kvale 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Names were never recorded, nothing was written at the moment of the interview to avoid paper proofs of information or any sort of conditioning.

<sup>20</sup> Italy, Norway, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sweden.



### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*“States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”.*

(Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989:art. 32)

I will start this section on theory with a brief definition of this term in order to clarify the use of different notions in this paper. Theory is “a set of concepts used to define and/or explain some phenomenon” providing “a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized” (Silverman, 2005:98).

Qualitative research generally follows a theoretical rather than a statistical logic and generalization is linked to theoretical propositions rather than to populations (Silverman, 2005:130). Hence, considering this, theories used in qualitative studies, such as this one, might not succeed in statistically generalizing the produced data to different contexts. It is perhaps possible though, that a similar study carried out with similar procedures but in a different context could produce analogous results, showing that my findings are not a mere “one-off occurrence” (Black, 1999b :21).

Thus, the outcomes of this paper cannot be generalized in a statistical sense and the aim is to discuss the phenomenon of child labour through the analytical lenses of two theoretical perspectives which are the theory of oppression and of state failure. These concepts have been considered particularly important for my study since they allow to analyse child labour from an inside perspective that refers to those mechanisms at the base of the Congolese system.

The results give both an insight into the idiosyncratic aspects of child labour in the two cases of Kalima and Kampene and through their link to general theories, contribute to a deeper insight into the phenomenon of child labour in general.

This chapter will first outline the concept of oppression mainly following Young (1990) and the theories linked to it, making reference to general perspectives and definitions, leaving space to a discussion of the theory of failed states.

### **3.1. The Concept of Oppression**

*My dream is the dream of having a society that is less ugly and less unjust; a society in which it would be easier to love, and therefore easier to live, easier to dream; a decent society, permanently striving to overcome discrimination and the negation of others, for example; a society that struggles for equality. By Paulo Freire. (Rossatto, 2005:19)*

Oppression is a term that we seldom hear and use in our contemporary society since it tends to be confined in the philosophical-theoretical sphere of socio-political movements (i.e. Marxism, Sexism, Racism, Socialism, Ageism, Feminism, etc.). Nevertheless, the concept of oppression has an important role to play in our current world and different authors (Henderson and Waterstone, 2009; Rossatto, 2005; Young, 1990) tried to look at it from different perspectives which are not exclusively locked within the discourse of political and social movements.

Young (1990:48) for example, reinterpreted the concept of oppression in the key of contemporary capitalist society and identified five forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. The first three categories have been considered particularly relevant to this thesis since they concern those structural, institutional, and power relations that limit people's alternatives and opportunities and they represent an aspect of the situation of child labourers in the DRC (ibid.:58).

#### **Exploitation**

Exploitation in our contemporary society consists in the fact that "some people exercise their capacities under the control and for the benefit of others" (Young, 1990:49). This creates an imbalance of power between those who own the means of production (and power) and those who work and suffer material deprivation, loss of control and power. Using the term exploitation nowadays makes reference to social rules that create inequality and are embedded in the questions "who for whom" and "how is work compensated" (ibid.:50).

#### **Marginalization**

Marginalization goes beyond the exclusion of people based on ethnic belonging, or faith, but extends to other portions of the population such as: old people, unemployed, disabled, homeless, etc... According to Young, this form of oppression is one of the worst, given the fact that entire groups of society are cut out from social life and sometimes they are dependent on the welfare systems that support them (if any).

## **Powerlessness**

‘The labour of most augments the power of few’. This is the explanatory phrase behind the concept of powerlessness that refers to people who lack power and authority and always take orders from bosses who enrich themselves through the efforts of those they subordinate. Powerlessness can thus be seen as inhibition in developing capacities and in participating in decision-making processes and enduring insolent treatments (Young, 1990:58).

## **Cultural Imperialism**

Cultural imperialism is “universalization of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm” (Young, 1990:59). Through this process, the dominant group imposes its views, ideas, and goals establishing a “paradoxical oppression”. This is because people are first recognized and categorized as “out-cast” (according to the dominant stereotypes), and then they experience invisibility since the leading group “fails to recognize the perspective embodied in their cultural expressions” (ibid.:60).

## **Violence**

Young (1990) mainly analyses physical violence and he refers to it as a form of oppression in terms of its acceptance and its regular happening in our contemporary society as a systematic social practice – either because of direct irrational violent acts such those against a targeted group, e.g. blacks – or because of imposed social structures within which violence is perpetrated.

In the light of the above, the concept of oppression finds different interpretations and *mis-en-oeuvre* in various contexts and periods. This great variety of frameworks enriches the discussion on this topic but, on the other side, it raises difficulties in finding a universal definition suitable for all cases. In this thesis, the concept of oppression will be narrowed down to two forms, namely “direct” and “structural” oppression. Both refer to the inhibition of people’s exercising of their abilities, or expressing their needs, feelings, and ideas.

### **3.1.1. Direct Oppression**

Direct oppression refers to coercive and intentional harm and discriminatory acts that an oppressor group performs against an oppressed one especially in terms of class, sex, race, religion, and disability (Lansdown, 1994:35). In addition to discrimination in these categories, there is another form of direct oppression that refers to deliberate harmful actions based on what I would call transitional physical/mental status (on the basis of age for example). This is the case for children, who can suffer injustices because of their condition as children. This

oppression justifies coercion on children who are considered to be lacking civil status deriving from:

*“historical attitudes about the nature of childhood [...] with a tendency to rely [...] on the presumption of children’s biological and psychological vulnerability in developing law, policy and practice”* (Kitzinger, 1997:182).

---

This definition regards children as incompetent subjects and therefore easy to subjugate and manipulate since the concept of childhood in itself is considered a state of oppression as children are “frequently denied a language of power” (University of Oxford, 2001).

All types of oppression described above hark back to the biological origins of the oppressed, referring to the conditions (class, gender, ethnic group, physical/mental status) in which they were born and made them “inferior beings” not having rights or voice.

### **3.1.2 Structural Oppression**

If we are to analyse deeply oppression starting from the definition of the word “oppress”, which is “to keep in subjection, hardship, and to cause distress” (Derriennic, 1972:362), we will identify the concept of structural oppression, which is the opposite of direct oppression.

Whilst direct oppression makes use of direct violence aiming at causing harm to a targeted group or person, structural oppression is unintentional violence without a subject (Young, 2009:56) and it is embedded in the society. This structural oppressive behaviour is not directly, intentionally or purposefully targeted against an “inferior group, but it refers to:

*“disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of society”* (Young, 1990:41).

---

This structural oppression is built into the society and its rules rather than being a deliberate action of a tyrant or an elite group. Oppression is perceived as a structure that is reproduced continuously by and within a society and therefore cannot be eradicated by simply changing the rulers who are the perpetrators (Young, 1990:41). Structural oppression is not the product of policies or laws tailored against a specific targeted group but it is the sum of every-day behaviours, societal structures and environments (including media, economic market, educational system) within which oppression occurs.

### **3.1.3. Consequences of Oppression**

Among the oppressed group, oppression triggers a rotary cycle of downward attitudes which is hard to stop and whose transformation requires time and a process of *conscientização* (coming-to-consciousness) as will be explained in section 3.1.4. The attitudes

stemming from a coercive behaviour are numerous and in my analysis I will use four concepts that have been considered particularly relevant in the context of child miners. The issues I will illustrate are: culture of silence, passivity, paternalism, and fatalism. They are part of a theoretical framework developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. To show the value of these concepts for my study, I will use examples from my fieldwork providing more evidence in the course of the thesis.

**Culture of silence** refers to a *lethargy* of those coerced as a result of the whole economic, social, and political domination (Freire, 1972:10). The oppressed become immobilized, silent, apathetic beings in a shadowy position and are far from being “encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world” (ibid.:2,3). This occurs because they are culturally alienated by an equally alienated society in which power elites (both internal and external) rule with an *iron hand* (ibid.:47).

**Passivity** refers to a behaviour of acceptance of an imposed role with adaptation to the world as it is presented and to the distorted and partial view of reality deposited by the ruling group (Freire, 1972:47). The resigned words of this child miner are a clear example of this attitude:

*M – If you could decide, would you still do this job?*

*C – Well, this is what I have; I’m quite fine with this.*

*M – But if you had another possibility...*

*C – Yes but I don’t [...]*

[Child miner, 13 or 14 - Kalima]

---

This passivity is the consequence of a traditional system of thought which does not encourage people to engage in creative thinking but makes them submissive, imposing obedience. Hence, “the more the oppressed accept this passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world” as presented by the oppressors (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999), as explained by a pedagogy professor at the University of Kisangani (DRC):

*“They see no other possibilities so they are content with what they have. There are no activities in our milieu [...] There’s nothing but the forest and the mines [...]”*

---

Some scholars (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999) have regarded the issue of passivity in a very critical way looking at it as a contribution to subordination by the coerced group. According to them, subordinates are not solely *objects* of oppression, but they cooperate to it since they “retain some agency and actively participate in the oppressive exercise” (ibid.:43). This is not to say that the dispossessed do not oppose the oppressors and oppose coercion, but examples of successful social revolution are rare and “social hierarchy remains relatively stable over time” as a consequence of passivity and cooperation with the system of oppression (ibid.).

**Paternalism** is another important piece of this complex puzzle and it refers to actions and behaviours of oppressors that interfere with people's will and that are justified by a claim that the oppressed will be better off and protected from harm thanks to the oppressors (Freire, 1972:37). Perhaps, the best way to clarify this point is to give space to the words of my interviewees:

*CM<sup>21</sup> – This [child labour in the mines] is a social matter, so we authorize minors to come here so they find means to pursue their studies. If a child finds a bit of gold, he sells it and he has money to survive.*

*M – Are you saying that you're doing social work here?*

*CM – Yes, but in reality law strictly forbids minors to work here.*

*M – So, in the name of a “social aim”, you breach international, national, and local laws [...] because you're doing social work?*

*[I stood up and I started turning on myself, pointing at all the children around us who were working]*

*CM – Yes, it is for a social aim.*

*[Comité Minier of the Mine of Kiabombua (Kampene)]*

---

Paternalism does not limit itself to the justification of the supposedly “well-being” of those afflicted by oppression, but it embraces the welfare of the whole society, as argued by the Vice President of SAKIMA:

*M – [...] But the mining activity continues?*

*F – Yes, but how. [...] People who used to work with us [...] are now those who exploit artisanally and they sell to those they want. We, the owners, of course, could forbid this because it's against the law [...] but we meet a reality on the ground that has a security and a social façade. If we forbid them to work they can organize a rebellion [...] we tolerate this in the name of social peace.*

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These words reflect the oppressor's view according to which the primal need is to avoid rebellion, uprising, and people's coming-to-consciousness, and therefore allow artisanal exploitation (also for children) so to ensure what they call *social peace* that is nothing but “social apathy”.

Finally, **fatalism** is another widespread attitude and Freire sees it more as a historical and sociological heritage rather than a distinctive feature of people's behaviour (Freire, 1972:37). He deepens his clarification underlying that fatalism is often related to the power of destiny or fortune, as we can notice in the answer of the Mining Committee of Kiabombua according to whom nature is the almighty force in front of which men are helpless:

*M – And if their child falls inside that mud and that water and doesn't come out, what are you going to do?*

*CM – Well, this is the will of the nature, you can't help it.*

---

Also God is part of these inevitable forces of fatalism as will be described in section 4.6.1.

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<sup>21</sup> Comité Minier (= Mining Committee)

### **3.1.4 What's next? *Conscientização* as a liberating praxis**

The term *conscientização*<sup>22</sup> refers to the process that the dispossessed go through by acquiring consciousness of their condition “perceiving the social, political and economic contradictions” (Freire, 1972:preface), and acting consequently against the coercive elements that characterize the society in which they live (ibid.:81). As soon as people become aware of their situation, they “emerge from their submersion acquiring the ability to intervene in reality” (Mayo, 2004:37,38) abandoning cooperative passivity. Coming-to-consciousness is a sort of awakening process that brings people from a previous inert status of inaction and torpor to a new level of awareness, knowledge and active participation in their liberation.

*Conscientização* is a cultural action by which the dispossessed acquire new understanding of the world towards freedom, emancipation, creation of alternatives, and social development (Mayo, 2004:51). According to Freire, the oppressed can emancipate and free themselves through some pedagogical practices which are seen as political actions, especially thanks to the educational framework that Freire proposes, which is critical literacy. This type of literacy can be seen as *liberatory* education with a collective dimension of learning and a dialogic relationship between people involved (Freire, 1972:60). This dialogue include reflection and action and it is therefore important to underline that simple thinking is not a liberating praxis in itself, since it risks to fall in what Freire calls verbalism<sup>23</sup>.

Hence, those who undertake the path of critical literacy will go through two steps: first they will gain consciousness of themselves as beings and of their situation, and second, their reflection upon their status will be transformed in action directed at changing their environment. The first step does not only refer to the gain of an articulated idea of their situation, but also to the transformation of their condition which becomes overt, explicit and conscious (Galtung, 1996:74).

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout the thesis, I will stick to the original Portuguese term since it gives a clear idea of the coming-to-consciousness process.

<sup>23</sup> Similarly, mere action without reflection leads to activism and sacrifice of reflection.

### ***3.2. Modern nation-state: Strong, Weak, Failed or Collapsed?***

*“Our ship of state is today sinking! A few are manipulating the system to their advantage, but our intellectuals, our women, our youth, the masses are being flushed down the drain. All our systems, educational, economic, health, are in a shambles. Yet we persist in our national obtuseness ... No ... To be, we have to think”* (Saro-Wiwa, 1995).

The other concept that this study will employ is the theory of the failed states, “which has been used to explain the failure of [universal public education in] Africa” (Bass, 2004:68) and therefore adds to the understanding of child labour.

Many modern nation-states have grounded their power upon violence, meaning that the state used coercive violence without legitimacy and sometimes failed in delivering political goods to its population (Rotberg, 2004:2). Hence, according to their capacity of delivering effectively the most crucial political goods, states have been classified in four categories: strong, weak, failed and collapsed. This classification is a relatively recent construct but it refers to a perception of states that is “historically continuous rather than representing a new phenomenon” (Utas, 2009).

Political goods that states ought to provide to their population include a series of services which have been placed in a hierarchical order on top of which there is human security, which refers to the capacity of the state to protect national population from external invasion, internal threats, or any other form of random violence (Klare, 2004:117; Rotberg, 2004:3). Among political goods we also find participation in political processes, provision of medical and health care, education and any other physical infrastructure (Rotberg, 2004: 4).

Following this definition, strong states fully accomplish the delivery of political goods to their citizens, they have complete control over their territory, and successfully perform in indicators including GDP, HDI, and the Transparency International's CPI (Rotberg, 2004).

Weak states have temporal problems because of internal antagonism, greed, despotism, and tensions. Their ability to provide political goods is diminishing and deteriorating.

Failed states (e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, DRC...) poorly perform on the delivery of the above indicated political goods, they report a sharp fall of indicators (GDP, HDI, CPI, etc), and are characterized by tense, deep and dangerous war situations. A distinctive characteristic of failed states is the incapacity to control the peripheral and hinterlands regions, especially those occupied by out-groups (Herbst, 2000:11,12). This can be attributed both to bad governance, to the state’s incapability of consolidating formal control over the



territory, and to the geographical features<sup>24</sup> of the country in question, e.g. in terms of dimensions, position, inhospitable territories, and other peculiar environmental conditions (Rotberg, 2004:9). Furthermore, failed states are ruled by elite regimes characterized by the partial or total lack of central authority and political will to expand equal opportunities. The government is constituted by leaders who steal from the state for their individual benefit (or for the benefit of a restricted élite around them) without working for the welfare of the population whose demands are not met. A local Deputy of the Maniema Province explained this well by underlying that:

*“The shape of the Congolese or Zairian State is the oligarchy. We’re living in an oligarchy with a minority on the top who is extremely rich at the expenses of the majority on the bottom who lives in an incredible misery. This is what we have, and it is normal for all oligarchies around the world. It is the oligarchy based on egoism and small interests to the detriment of the majority”.*

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Thus, the correlation that can be found between risk of failure and delivery of political goods is an inverse one: the more political goods are delivered, the less likely failure is to happen.

In collapsed states “political goods are obtained through private means and security is equated with the rule of the strong” (Rotberg, 2004:25). In these states (e.g. Somalia) people lose their status as “citizens” turning into mere inhabitants while sub-state and/or non-state actors take over. Warlords come into power, controlling regions of the country, setting up their own local mechanisms, markets, nets, and arrangements.

It is crucial to remind that a country cannot be classified weak, failed, or collapsed according to one indicator only: rather the sum of “several available indicators taken together should provide quantifiable and qualitative warnings” of a probable failure/collapse (Herbst, 2000:255).

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<sup>24</sup> In the case of the DRC, geography is an important factor of failure, especially when considering the Eastern part (Maniema, South and North Kivu) whose de-centralized position far away from the capital Kinshasa, provided a degree of political and economic autonomy (Global Witness 2004:9).

### ***3.3. The DRC today: sad heritage of a troubled past & tragic consequence of an unscrupulous present***

In the belief that we cannot understand the present without understanding the past, I shall begin this section with a rapid overview of the history of failure in the DRC. For reasons of conciseness, I will not discuss historical facts previous to independence (1960): however, to better understand the current situation, a thorough study of the Congolese history has been carried out.

This section finds its starting point in the period 1965-1997, during which the country was ruled by the dictator Mobutu. It was in this timeframe – to which I will refer as *Mobutism* – that, according to the coordinator of a local NGO, the first signs of failure appeared:

*“We lived 32 years of dictatorship under Mobutu and everything began from there, from the ‘60s, throughout the ‘70s, and during the ‘80s we’ve been failing and we still are. Everything needs to be re-done. Some thought that things could be changed with wars, so we had our first war in ‘96 but you know that it’s impossible to install democracy with war. It’s impossible!”*

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Mobutu “adopted ruinous policies leading to the corrupt mismanagement” (Global Witness, 2004:4) of the DRC based on individualism, egoism, and brutality, ruling as if the country was his personal backyard. The state functionaries were nothing but intermediaries who had to transmit the orders coming from Mobutu who sought to accumulate resources as rapidly as possible during his dictatorship, and particularly during his last years, since personal, political, and economic insecurity increased (Schatzberg, 1988:3). Mobutu established a patronage-based system under the national slogan “*Un Père, Parti, et Etat*”<sup>25</sup>, according to which the sole *Maître*<sup>26</sup> thinker of the country was the Chief of the State who assumed the role of a father. This political imagery of the president as a father<sup>27</sup> persists nowadays, as can be deduced from the words of this child miner aged 15 in the mine of Kiabombua who addressed this video message to President Joseph Kabila:

*“Father President, help us to feel better, look how we work here in Congo, in Pangi, Kampene, Biunkutu. Especially here in the mine of Kiabombua we work very hard. So, father President, help us to feel good and if you can, please take some time to come here to see what’s going on. Thanks!”*

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<sup>25</sup> One Father, Party, and State.

<sup>26</sup> Master.

<sup>27</sup> Schatzberg dedicated the whole fifth chapter of his book “*The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*” (1988) to the discussion of “The State as Family, Mobutu as Father” (pp. 71-98).

Maybe this is more a sign of respect and politeness, rather than a remnants of *Mobutist* ideology, but still, it causes mixed feelings when youths refer to their President as “dad”.

Besides this centralized, *élitarian* and predatory system, other signs of failure were visible, especially during the last years of the regime. Indeed, the informal sector of the economy – on which locals were surviving, and which was characterized by labour exploitation, expropriation and criminalization (De Koning, 2008:14) – was so large that diamonds and gold clandestinely smuggled from Zaire counted for 94% of Belgian imports from Burundi in 1988 (Global Witness, 2004:9). Furthermore, Mobutu lost control over entire parts of the country, especially in the East, where rival forces organised opposition movements such as the AFDL led by Laurent Désiré Kabila who took over and became President after the removal of Mobutu in 1997.

The proverb “a tiger does not change its stripes, nor a leopard its spots” is explanatory in this context. According to one of my respondents, a local deputy of Maniema, with Kabila in power nothing changed but the name, the dictatorship bore the imprint of Mobutu’s:

*“When Kabila arrived, he thought he would change the things but he did not have any programme, hence, he went back: he took the Mobutism and he imposed it under a different name. It’s the same oligarchy that continues”.*

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Other movements occupied the country in 1994, such as the Rwandan Hutu militias forces “Interahamwe”<sup>28</sup> who moved from neighbouring Rwanda to the Hutu refugees camps of Eastern DRC (Clapham, 2004:89). This multi-presence of non-state actors contributed to destabilize the situation that collapsed in what has been defined Africa’s first World War<sup>29</sup> (1998-2003). After the death of Laurent Désiré Kabila, a transitional government was installed following negotiation talks in South Africa. In 2006, Joseph Kabila – son of the deposed ruler – became president.

Thus, these last 20 years have been characterized by a highly complex conflict situation that led to more than 3.5 million deaths and widespread instability (Global Witness, 2004:5). Many factors came into play and some of them are particularly relevant and linked to the situation of child labourers and will therefore be analysed in terms of the following: high level of corruption, impunity and sketchy judicial system, looting of natural resources, and foreign involvement.

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<sup>28</sup> After the Rwandan genocide in April-July 1994, a million Hutu refugees spilled across the border towards DRC. Among them, there were anti-Tutsi ideologists who started regrouping, recruiting, and retraining into groups such as the *Interahamwe*, the *Rassemblement Démocratique pour le Rwanda* and later the *Armée de Libération du Rwanda*. (ICG, 2003:5).

<sup>29</sup> It was named Africa’s World War because troops from different countries participated: Zimbabwe, Angola, Chad, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi (Global Issues).

## **Corruption**

Corruption is a common feature of many African countries (though not those exclusively) and it refers to a shady system characterized by bribes and kickbacks aimed at obtaining otherwise illegal gains, information, concessions etc. The DRC is an exemplifying case of this, as was explained by the director of the DHPI of Pretoria:

*M - Could you compare this situation of mining in the DRC to the situation that has been going on in South Africa?*

*O - No, no, you see... this only happens when you've a fragile state. A weak state where corruption is rife, where bribery becomes the way of life, where the concern of the government is not for the well being of its people but for what they get out of the government for the period they're in power. The DRC is a classical case of this.*

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From this, it is possible to notice how corruption represents a permeating feature in a lot of African countries, but with considerable variation in its consequences for the development of a peaceful state/society.

## **Impunity and sketchy Judicial System**

Impunity refers to an unjust mechanism of law enforcement, in which as soon as a common citizen commits a crime he/she is put on trial, but as soon as the responsibility of such a crime falls on a representative of the State, immediate arrangements are taken in order not to send him to court, as explained by a Deputy of the Province of Maniema:

*"First of all, there's impunity. It is the most important aspect. As soon as a common citizen commits a crime they put him in jail, but as soon as it is a responsible of the State who commits a crime, they'll find all the possible arrangements not to send him to jail. They don't judge him. This is the form of the State".*

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In the DRC, this is aggravated by a poorly organized judicial system which is not impartial and has been described to me as a "colander" by the director of a local school. This definition gives the idea of the mismanagement of the judicial system that needs to be revised through the implementation of a good governance, meaning that authorities would take accountability and engage themselves in helping the country to exit its problems. The coordinator of a local NGO explained that only the creation of responsible authorities will help the implementation of a lawful justice system. According to him, the sole way to stop corruption is creating a functioning justice system able to stop those who commit violence:

*[...] a justice system that can stop those who commit violence because authorities will be able to do it, by establishing laws that are respected by everybody. With this, corruption will end preventing mafia-type organizations from coming here and installing their law.*

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## Looting of Natural Resources

The following words of the Director of the DHPI of Pretoria are useful for starting this section on uncontrolled looting of natural resources:

*“Anywhere there is a conflict in Africa, you will find natural resources [...] The people exploiting these resources are most likely not from the country itself [...] the perpetrators are not indigenous people [...] There are groups of mercenaries, soldiers involved supported by international buddies for the exploitation of minerals. [...]”*

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These words might remind us of terms like “resource-conflict”, “blood diamonds”, or “coltan war”, which were used in the last years in reference to mineral-fuelled conflicts, among which the one in DRC that saw rebel groups occupying portions of the Eastern territories for the plunder of minerals dug by local labour force (including children), and then sold in exchange for arms.

The DRC can thus be classified among the resource-rich states that present higher instability given their resource wealth (e.g. Sierra Leone, Angola). The countries included in this group often, but not always, tend to experience more conflict situations than states poor in natural resources, as described by the coordinator of a local NGO:

*“One of the primary causes of war is the richness of DRC, our mineral potentialities. This is the primary cause of war, especially the last wars after 1996 that saw mineral wealth and foreign intervention as main causes. Foreign powers realized that the DRC was rich and that the way to exploit this richness was to make the country un-governable, impose wars – that had as sole objective the exploitation of natural resources. All UN Reports – especially the Panel on Natural Resources in the DRC – are clear about this issue. Rwanda has no other reason for war but mineral exploitation. During the war we had more than 50 Mining MNCs that are still there. All this was not about giving democracy neither to the DRC nor helping people to exit poverty. All was to steal minerals and therefore, you see Ugandan and Rwandan troops clustering around mining areas”*

---

Natural resource abundance is often associated with a “paradox of plenty” (De Koning, 2008:1) in which high-value natural resources coincide with poor state performance, bad governance, and greater likelihood of conflict especially in countries that export primary commodities (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002; Le Billon, 2001). A more thorough study of the relationship between resources and conflict represents a pressing field of research since both environmental scarcity and resource abundance are claimed to be closely linked to conflicts.

However, these perspectives on abundance (and scarcity) of resources do not take into consideration social and political variables that mediate conflict risks<sup>30</sup>, and thus fail in

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<sup>30</sup> Political Ecology lends itself to this mediation role examining “issues of access, control, and distribution of available resources and benefits” (De Koning 2008:3).

explaining why abundance and scarcity are not a sufficient factor of conflict and why they are overlooked in current policies (Le Billon, 2001:565).

### **Foreign Involvement**

Let's imagine the DRC as a big *yummy* cake that attracts lot of "hungry" people who are ready to do whatever in order to have a piece of it. At first sight, those people seem to be locals willing to take advantage from local richness, but with a closer look, it is possible to see that they are likely to be not from the country itself, but those who are drawing the resources from the country are foreign and simply use middlemen (locals) to eat "the cake". In the Congolese context, the term foreign needs to be explained carefully since it includes private western multinational corporations, as well as states, both rushing for Congo's wealth, as explained by the Director of the DHPI of Pretoria:

*S – It is not just a question of whatever you want to call it the Interahamwe, Munyamulenge, Rwanda, DRC. It's much more complicated than that. There are groups of mercenary soldiers involved supported by international buddies for the exploitation of minerals.*

*M – Are you saying that there's an international involvement in all this?*

*S – Of course. There has to be. It wouldn't work without that.*

*M – So, you mean that there are international firms involved, Multi National Corporations, or...*

*S – No, no, they would not take that risk. They use intermediaries and the intermediaries we call them mercenaries. So they wouldn't be overt enough to say that "X Company" in Germany or in France or whatever is directly involved in the use of child labour for the exploitation of coltan in the DRC. So, what they would say is this: they would pay a 3<sup>rd</sup> force. This concept of the 3<sup>rd</sup> force has been used throughout Africa in many situations. So when they get fingered but not caught, they will use the pretext: still; it's not us. It's not us.*

---

The use of intermediaries highlighted in this passage has several values. First of all intermediaries help to lose track of the production/trade/smuggling chain creating a sort of arranged confusion that often misleads those trying to make sense out of it. Secondly, they provide a security framework for those trading illegally who cannot be directly charged for exploitation, and can easily shift the blame to those who gave them orders, and the latter ones can point at those who are behind them and so on and on. Thirdly, the use of intermediaries gives rise to an apparently "clean" business that creates a clear conscience among final consumers who do not feel guilty for the previous acts, either because they are kept obscure or because they do not know anything, or because these procedures are justified as local *débrouillardise*<sup>31</sup>:

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<sup>31</sup> *Débrouillardise* can be defined as fending for oneself. It is a "shared way of interpreting challenging everyday survival situations in a culturally, ethnically, and religiously heterogeneous society" (Waage, 2006:62).

*“Pour l’acheteur final, l’intérêt de telles chaînes d’exploitation est patent. Il n’a pas non plus lui-même à connaître dans quelles conditions un produit lui est fourni. Le travail des enfants qui, rappelons-le, n’a pas d’existence juridique, se situe à l’autre bout de la chaîne : il peut donc l’ignorer. Cela lui permet d’être en accord avec sa conscience et avec la loi, puisque les intermédiaires [...] endossent la responsabilité d’une embauche illégale d’enfants” (Morice, 1996:275)<sup>32</sup>.*

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In Kalima and Kampene, anyone accessing the mines can see how intermediaries work and how the mineral-trade chain takes place. In fact, outside the mines or in the main road of the village, there are local buyers called *preneurs*<sup>33</sup> who are positioned in *comptoirs*<sup>34</sup> (picture 1 a *comptoir* in Kalima). Miners bring the minerals they find to these *comptoirs* and they immediately get the amount due according to the quantity of ore. At this stage, the value of coltan, for example, is around 15US\$/kilogram<sup>35</sup>. As soon as the *preneurs* possess a fairly good quantity of minerals, they send it by plane (Russian Antonovs), or pirogue, or foot, to a bigger city – such as Bukavu (capital of the Province of South Kivu) where a second level of intermediaries steps in. Up to this point, no official document is issued and only when those second intermediaries take the minerals, the “legal trade” starts. The second intermediaries carry the ore to other *comptoirs* for a second evaluation: the ore is again weighted, valued, and priced for a second level of buyers. The value of the mineral has now increased: for coltan it is around 25US\$/kilogram. Finally, the minerals are transported outside the country through the “easiest border” (often Rwanda or Burundi) and then they are shipped out of the continent from harbours such as that of Dar Es Salaam. At this final stage of shipping, the price per kilo of coltan, for example, has reached 50US\$-80US\$/kilogram.

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<sup>32</sup> “For the final buyer the interest of these exploitation chains is obvious. He does not have to gather information on the conditions under which the product is given to him. We need to remember that the work of children does not exist from the juridical point of view, and it is located at the opposite end of the production chain: hence, he [final buyer] can ignore it. This allows him to have clear conscience feeling in accordance with the law, since the intermediaries [...] take charge of the illegal employment of children” (personal translation).

<sup>33</sup> Literally “takers”.

<sup>34</sup> *Comptoir* means counter.

<sup>35</sup> Information on prices was gathered during a personal meeting with Ruben De Koning, researcher at SIPRI.

From the above overview on corruption, impunity, looting of natural resources and foreign involvement, it is possible to notice that the failure of the Congolese State presents many characteristics that are common in other cases of failure (Sierra Leone, Liberia) namely: a “patronage system” based on favours and privileges reserved to a narrow élite often linked to who is in power aiming at personal wealth; incapacity of controlling peripheral areas of the territory (e.g. the East of the DRC, which is occupied by rebels); lack of infrastructures and sharp fall of indicators such as GDP<sup>36</sup> (US\$ 300/capita in 2007), and HDI, which is 0,361 (Klare, 2004:120); (Rotberg, 2004:7-11). Conflicts are still going on within the state’s boundaries; corruption and impunity are rife, and law enforcement is low. A looting mechanism has also taken hold and is aggravated by foreign involvement and by the state incapacity to protect its population, as witnessed by two child miners aged 16 in Kalima:

*M – If you could, who would you address your complaints to?*

*C – We could address our demands to the authorities of the country, but we know that the country doesn’t work properly. Even if we address them to the authorities, they won’t help us, because the government is not responsible for this.*

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Children themselves realize that the state is not taking accountability for its population. They deal with their situation with lucidity and sometimes with hopelessness as proved by the child miners cited above: they would not even try to address their demands to the authorities because they know they do nothing.

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<sup>36</sup> Gross Domestic Product at Purchasing Power Parity (GDP-PPP).



## 4. CHILD LABOUR

This chapter will first introduce the topic of child labour and will then analyse it on two levels: international, providing a brief overview of the situation of child labourers worldwide; and at the Congolese level by focusing on child labour in the artisanal mines of Kalima and Kampene.

### 4.1. Defining child labour

Children are considered to be “fragile actors” in our society and in need of particular attentions by adults (in families, societies, and institutions) who are expected to safeguard them and ensure the best quality of life possible. That special protection of the child is justified by “a lack or insufficiency of discernment on his part, the malleability of his character and his physical and mental state, both of which are in full development” (UN CRC, 2000:19). Despite this attentive definition, children’s abuse is common, children are treated as “social objects incapable of contributing to the community, rather than actors or social subjects”<sup>37</sup> (Gendreau, 1996:161).

The legal framework for protecting children is extensive but often ambiguous, theoretical, and lacking real action. The Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights promulgated the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child” in 1959 and the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” in 1989, and in this same year, the Organization for African Unity (now AU) created the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Despite the common legal character of these texts, they provide different frameworks within which diverse perceptions of children emerge. While the UN Convention perceives children’s rights as absolute, according to Kielland and Tovo (2006) the African Charter interprets rights differently:

*“making them relative and dependent on the performance of the duties by the child. Children who do not perform according to their duties are not necessarily punished – they may be left to themselves [...] this could be perceived as losing their rights [...]”* (ibid.:8).

This diversity rests on the different views of childhood that characterize the two contexts in which the declarations developed. The UN Convention has been designed within a western framework and suits western customs; on the other hand, the African Charter was developed considering African culture and habits. This highlights how challenging it can be to find a common definition, and many times, how inappropriate it can be to extend one definition to different settings where the realities on the ground are far from being homogenous.

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<sup>37</sup> Own translation from French to English.

However, similarities in the different codes are common such as the prohibition of admitting children to employment before an appropriate age<sup>38</sup> or to any occupation which would prejudice health, education (depriving attending school or obliging premature withdrawals), or interfere with physical, mental or moral development (International Labour Organization, 2004:16; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1959; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989). In relation to the topic of the thesis, this means that all worst and hazardous forms of work remain banned up to the age of 18.

For determining whether a child is a labourer or not, international laws defined a set of criteria that include working hours, remuneration, age and other measures that sometimes tend to be confused and confusing (Gendreau, 1996:154; Kielland and Tovo, 2006:2,3). Moreover, statistics based on these data often tend to include only children within a particular age range, giving a partial image of the situation (Gendreau, 1996:156). Thus, for the sake of clarity, in this thesis, I consider as determining factors for analysing child labour the qualitative characteristic of labour, namely: how labour is carried out, which labour is done, and under which circumstances. From this, it is possible to gather that not all activities that children do are child labour and a dividing line should be drawn between those activities considered harmful, and those that are acceptable. Some tasks are seen as children's duty by the African Charter which states that "the child should work for the cohesion of the family [...] and assist in case of need" (Organization for African Unity, 1990:art.31). The African Charter refers to those activities considered as forms of socialization and involvement in the family economy that provide the child with knowledge, skills, and values for the better appreciation of efforts and responsibilities.

However, the attempt to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable activities<sup>39</sup> remains theoretical since many children involved in domestic activity do suffer harmful consequences, their education is compromised, and health can be affected. Moreover, on many occasions, children who begin with side-activities for supporting the family end up in being fully employed in the informal sector<sup>40</sup>, they quit school, and working becomes their primary activity.

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<sup>38</sup> The minimum age for admission to employment is determined by national legislation and can be set at 14, 15 or 16 years (ILO, 2004:17).

<sup>39</sup> They have also been classified respectively as "child work" and "child labour", following the definitions given by Fyfe (1989) and Whittaker (1986).

<sup>40</sup> ILO (2004:23) defines informal sector all those activities generating income in the informal economy: agriculture, domestic service, informal manufacturing activities, mining and quarrying, street vending, small-scale fishing.

## 4.2. Child labour in the world.

ILO estimated that in 2004, there were 218 million children trapped in child labour (International Labour Organization, 2006:xi; UCW, 2010), with the highest percentages recorded in Africa, where 50 million children are estimated to work (UNICEF Childinfo, 2009). The distribution of child workers worldwide for the period 1999-2008 is indicated in the table. Children are employed in an extremely wide range of jobs, mainly within the informal sector because of its easy entry, its small scale operation, and the requirement of skills that are not necessarily linked to formal education

(ILO, 2004:23). Children are hired in illegal activities because their employment can be profitable and “safe” since it allows adults to stay behind the scenes while criminal actions are perpetuated by minors. There are several reasons why grownups hire child labourers and this section will briefly describe three of them.

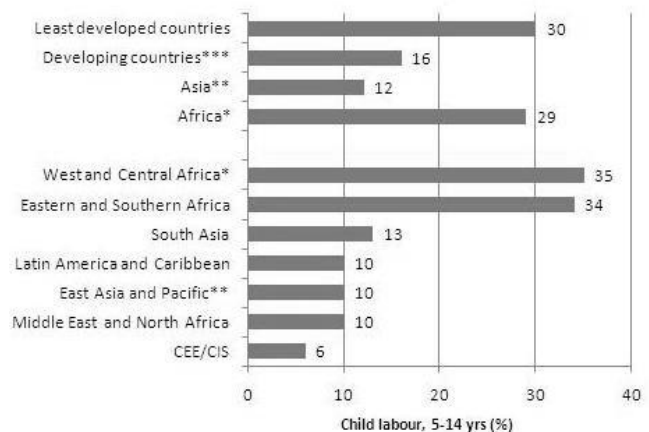
First of all, *written* laws generally protect children. When minors are involved in criminal activities and are caught red-handed, they are more likely to be referred to rehabilitation facilities, rather than being persecuted, put on trial, or imprisoned like adults. Therefore, adults tend to take advantage of this “privileged status” that children benefit from, and they recruit minors engaging them in illegal activities on behalf of them.

Secondly, children are easily persuadable, hence it is not hard to convince them to execute also dangerous and inappropriate tasks in exchange for almost nothing.

Finally, children are small and can, due to their physical structure, be employed in jobs in which tiny body and limbs are needed (i.e. mining, rolling cigarettes, knitting carpets...).

When children are employed for long time periods and especially when the job they do increasingly dominates their lives, they will tend to abandon completely school facilities. This happens because earnings attract them more than school since they do not see education as a guarantee for a better future nor as necessary for a good job placement, especially in countries where education and employment systems are inadequate, as explained by this young miner:

Children aged 5–14 engaged in child labour (%), by region (1999-2008)



Source : (UNICEF Childinfo 2009)

\* Excludes Nigeria

\*\* Excludes China

\*\*\* Excludes Nigeria and China

*M – Would you change this life and job if you had another opportunity?*

*P – Well, yes, but we've a problem at governmental level: there's lot of unemployment. I can finish this year my studies in Nursery but there are no jobs. No job, no possibilities, no salary. This makes me go to the mines to work and earn money to feed my children.*

[Miner and father of three children – Kalima]

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As a consequence of this, there will be a general decrease of the level of education among youth. Moreover, the number of child labourers is likely to increase due to the *emulation attitude* of children who tend to do what their friends do, as can be noticed from the answers given by these two child miners of the gold mine of Kiabombua:

*M – Why did you start?*

*C – Because I saw my friends coming here and going out with something so I thought I was better come here as well.*

[Child miner, 17 – Kampene]

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*M – What pushed you to come here today?*

*C – I've been influenced by my friends. I often see my friends coming back from the mines with money so I thought that I should also go and get money.*

[Child miner, 14 – Kampene]

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Both respondents give evidence that they emulate their friends as part of a socialization process for gaining a material reward.

#### **4.2.1. What?**

This section will describe the types of work that children do and the worst forms of child labour. Children who start working early, undergo a process of *incomplete socialization* which refers to a perverse insertion in the labour market that steals childhood from children and obliges them to face adult workers in a highly unequal situation in which a minor worker gets automatically a minor salary (Alvim, 1996:191; Stella, 1996:44).

Youth can be found at work both in rural contexts as well as in urban ones, and jobs differ according to the environments. In the former case, young people are mainly employed in fetching water and firewood, child-minding, subsistence farming, agriculture and land-linked jobs such as herding, fishing, mining (Bass, 2004:148). In the latter context, children are employed in manufacturing (construction, carpet knitting etc...), street jobs (selling, shoe shining, car glass cleaning, garbage collection, street performances<sup>41</sup>...), and domestic work (both in families as well as hotels and restaurants).

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<sup>41</sup> During my one-year stay in South America, I could notice children waiting near traffic lights. As soon as cars stopped, they performed small artistic shows and then passed car by car begging money.

Together with children engaged in the above mentioned labours, there are 126 million children employed in hazardous work and 8.4 million engaged in those inhuman and repugnant activities classified as Worst Forms of Child Labour by the ILO Convention 182 (International Labour Organization, 1999:art.3). The occupations that fall within this last category are:

*“Sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and forced labour;  
Compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;  
Use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution or pornography;  
Use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs;  
Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children”.*  
(International Labour Organization, 2004; UNICEF Childinfo, 2009)

---

The use of children in prostitution and armed combat can hardly be defined as labour. Rather, it is often classified as a new form of slavery<sup>42</sup>. For this reason, these two activities need to be analysed separately from other worst forms of child labour such as quarrying, mining, economic activities of street children.

#### **4.2.2. Why?**

It is hardly possible to delimit exhaustively the final causes for child labour. As with any analytical work, causes are presented differently according to the context for the analysis. However, for the purpose of my analysis I follow a categorization developed by Rossatto into “push factors” and “pull factors” (Rossatto, 2005:113).

The first category refers to a set of circumstances that characterize the environment in which children are living and consequently drive them to start working. The main push reason is poverty; it forces children to engage in different jobs – often exploitative and degrading – making children “commodities in the labour process” (Agbu and Codesria., 2009:2). Alongside poverty, there are other factors that push children to enter into the labour market, such as lack of alternatives and of encouraging stimulating environments, absence of a compulsory (and attractive) school system, disaggregation of family (Alvim, 1996:189; Morice, 1996).

On the other hand, pull factors include those aspects of the work that attract children more than other activities, such as sharing with friends and immediate money earnings to

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<sup>42</sup> According to Bales (2000), slavery refers to activities in which the child produces economic profit, is controlled psychologically, works because of the use or fear of violence, is not paid, and has few or no opportunities to escape (Kielland and Tovo, 2006:42).

which my respondents referred as *argent facile*, easy money. Also Yaro (1996:143) made reference to the concept of *argent facile* with reference to young gold diggers in Essakan (Burkina Faso).

Concerning the case of child labour in the mining sector in the DRC, many of the identified causes are part of the above described ‘push factors’ and include local extreme poverty, troubled families (irresponsible/absent parents, low/inexistent education of parents, dysfunctional families)<sup>43</sup>, a patchy educational system, lack of schools/haunts, low level of law enforcement and a non-functioning State which does not provide alternatives or protection to youths.

#### **4.2.3. Normality of child labour**

In addition to the above described aspects, there are other causes which are idiosyncratic in the mining context of Kalima and Kampene such as social tolerance and acceptance of child labour, as explained by the head of a local catholic school:

*M – What do you think of children in the mines? Isn't this a form of violence?*

*G – Well, it is a form of violence because it is an illegal exploitation of children. But it is left like this, it is tolerated. Illegal exploitation of children that is forbidden, but they do it anyway because, as I said earlier, of poverty.*

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Moreover, child labour is seen as indispensable for the family sustainment<sup>44</sup> as explained by this woman working in the cassiterite ASM of Kalima and mother of eleven children:

*M – Are [there] parents who send their children here to work?*

*P – If there are [...] it's for the conjuncture [...] At this moment, I'm alone but if I'd have my child besides me to transport the sand – as usual – I would find a greater quantity of cassiterite, that's why we send children to come with us. Have you understood?*

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Also the father of a 12-year-old boy in the mine of Kiabombua underlined how important child work is for alleviating parents from further expenses, and he explained why he allowed his child to dig, both as a form of *débrouillardise* as well as participation to family economy:

*M – Why did you come here with your child?*

*F – Well...the child only accompanied me and you know if he finds some gold he can buy his notebooks so when I don't have money he can buy them by himself.*

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<sup>43</sup> Dysfunctional families refers to those family units where “parents or caregivers build relationships based on aggression, and violence and where conflicts are resolved violently” (Cruz 2007:47).

<sup>44</sup> In African societies, child labour is seen as necessary for various reasons. First of all it helps alleviating the women's burden of running a household, farming, feeding etc. Secondly, it is perceived as a form of empowering the child who feels taken into consideration and feels satisfaction at being useful. Thirdly, it is a way of educating children such as in Nigeria where apprenticeship is part and parcel of the growing up process (Schlemmer 1996, Bass 2004:94, Kielland and Tovo 2006, Agbu 2009). Nevertheless, the cultural character of child labour in African societies is imbricated with the structural component of income (Bass 2004:47).

Another cause that emerged in the Congolese context refers to profit-oriented employers who allow children to work or recruit them since they constitute cheap labour often not able to organize against exploiters.

Another aspect concerns the perception of mining as a “killing-time activity” (Global Issues, 2008) since the local micro-environment in which children live lacks stimulus and young people prefer going to the mine rather than staying at home:

*M – So, why do you come here?*

*C – Because it is better coming here and looking for something that allow me to go to school, than staying at the village doing nothing.*

[Child miner, 17 - Kampene]

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Finally, in the DRC there is another over-arching cause that can be identified and can be referred to as the “misfortune of fortune”. The country is extremely rich in minerals, it has a lush nature that could permit a multitude of activities (both agricultural and commercial), it has huge rivers that could allow extensive electricity provision, even outside the country<sup>45</sup>, and it has a radiant and strong population who represent a great potential of development. Despite this “fortune” - or, rather because of this fortune - the DRC has gone through many years of conflict<sup>46</sup> and has been completely mismanaged since ever, as expressed by the resigned words of a man working in the artisanal mines in Kalima:

*“The problem is that our country cannot take care of us [...]. The country is ill”.*

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<sup>45</sup> Despite this, large portions of the country are not provided with electricity. Even the capital cities of several Provinces (i.e. Kindu for the Maniema Province) have an irregular and inadequate electricity provision.

<sup>46</sup> After Independence the main clashes were the 1996 AFDL insurgency, the 1998-2003 RCD vs. State conflict named “The African World War”, and the 2008 conflict over the mineral-rich territories in the Eastern Part (FDLR).

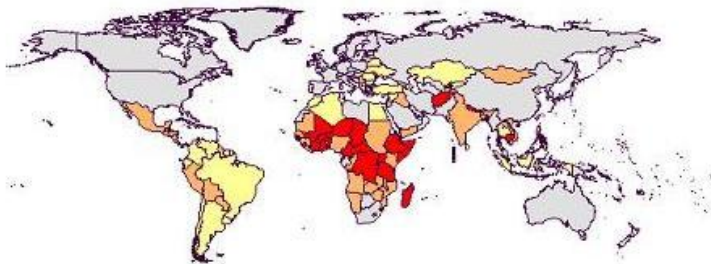
### 4.3. Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Democratic Republic of Congo

Africa is a very young continent where 51% of the whole population is below 18 years old and one child out of three aged 5-14 is estimated to work. The data indicate that the highest rates of child labour are found in this geographic area, with a total of 26.4% of economically active children, whilst Asia and Latin America counts respectively 18.8% and 5.1% (Bass, 2004:77).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage is more significant in rural areas since the rural population is higher than urban, and children tend to contribute a lot to housework in order to meet the family production needs – especially in agriculture (UNICEF Childinfo, 2009).

Percentage of children aged 5–14 years engaged in child labour (2003-2008)

**Child labour, 5-14 years**  
Less than 10 per cent  
10 - 29 per cent  
30 per cent or more  
Data not available Missing Value



Nevertheless, a rapid urbanization process is taking place and cities are growing fast, seeing more and more children employed in different work also in the cities. Africa is the area with the highest percentage of

child labourers aged 5–14, as shown in this map (UNICEF, 2009:197). However, this representation can be misleading since data are not available for a good portion of Asia and Middle East where child labour is widespread but often hidden and unreported. In fact, in absolute terms, Asia is estimated to have 122.3 millions of child labourers, whilst Africa counts 49.3 million (IPEC, 2009).

Concerning the DRC, there are 33,784,000 children under the age of 18 (United States Department of Labour, 2005) and it is estimated that 39.8% of children between 10 and 14 are employed in the informal working sector (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989:art.44). In 2000, the DRC submitted its report on the situation of children in the country (CRC/C/3/Add.57) following the prescription of article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that calls States parties to “submit to the Committee on the Rights of the Children (CRC), a report on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized to the children by the UN” (United Nations CRC, 2001:art.66).



After receiving the Congolese report, the CRC expressed its concerns on the high incidence of child labour in the country, especially in the informal sectors which are hard to control and are often left out by domestic legislation. Particular worries were related to the use of children as soldiers and miners (United Nations CRC, 2001:art.67). The Committee thus recommended the DRC “to make every effort to end child labour through the dissemination of children's rights to employers, parents, the public in general and to children themselves” (Gosine, 2008).

To conform with these recommendations, in 2001 the DRC ratified two pillar conventions on child protection, namely Convention 138 on the Minimum Age of admission to work, and Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. In compliance with these two conventions, national Congolese law forbids the employment of children in the mining sector as the Mining Committee of Kiabombua confirmed in an interview:

*“Disable men cannot come here, neither minors nor pregnant women. Finally, ill men are forbidden to come here as well”.*

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Despite this commitment, children are still allowed in the mines, their working conditions remain very bad, and their rights contemplated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the Labour Code, in the Mining Code, and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are violated. This brought the DRC to be listed as the country with “The Worst Forms of Child Labour” by the U.S. Department of Labour in 2006 (AlertNet, 2009).

#### ***4.4. Mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo***

For contextualization purposes, I shall devote this section of the thesis to a brief overview of the interested area, accompanied by an explanation of how mining is organized in the area studied.

The study took place in the ASM of Kalima and Kampene (mine of Kiabombua), territory of Pangi, Province of Maniema which has about 2 million inhabitants and a surface area of 132.770 km<sup>2</sup> (Annex 2). This Province was part of the ancient “Grand Kivu” whose capital city was Bukavu. In 1988, the “Grand Kivu” underwent the *découpage territorial* which divided the territory into the three provinces we find nowadays: North Kivu with capital city Goma, South Kivu with capital city Bukavu and Maniema with capital city Kindu. The Maniema Province was in turn divided into seven territories: Lubutu, Punia, Kailo, Pangi, Kibombo, Kasongo, and Kabambare. This research focused on child miners of Kalima and Kampene in the territory of Pangi for three reasons. First of all Pangi is one of the areas with the highest percentage of minerals<sup>47</sup>, secondly, it is provided with generators and solar panels that allowed me to use my electronic devices, and thirdly, the mines in Pangi are more accessible than in other territories.

According to the International Labour Organization, mining is classified as one of the worst forms of labour “by condition”<sup>48</sup>, meaning that its labour standards need to be regulated and defined at a national level, in compliance with the guidelines of the Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment<sup>49</sup>. The DRC has therefore adopted the Labour Code (Order No. 19/67 of 3 October 1967) which has this regulating task and establishes that the employment of a child under the age of 14 is prohibited (article 3), and those aged between 14 and 16 can only perform light work. According to article 108 of the above mentioned Code, no child aged between 14 and 16 can be employed for a period

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<sup>47</sup> The Ministry of Mines established a certain amount of *antennes minières* in the different territories according to the presence of minerals: 5 in Punia, 3 in Pangi, Lubutu, Kibombo, Kasongo, Kamambare, and 2 in Kailo. This shows that Pangi ranks second for presence of minerals.

<sup>48</sup> The worst forms of child labour have been divided into the unconditional worst forms “by definition”, and those “by condition” (i.e. hazardous work). Worst forms “by definition” are illegal according to international law and include slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, recruitment of child soldiers, and use of children for prostitution or pornography. Activities “by condition” are those hazardous jobs that each country has to regulate, such as manufacturing operations, mining, crushing rocks, deep sea diving, working at heights in construction, scavenging or rag-picking, or carrying heavy loads (ILO, 2004:46,47).

<sup>49</sup> Convention 138 fixes the minimum age at 14/15 for normal work, 12/15 for light, and 16/18 for dangerous ones.

exceeding four hours a day or work in breach of education, and no child between 16 and 18 may work more than eight hours a day (UN CRC, 2000: 53).

Through the decree No. 68/13 of 17<sup>th</sup> May 1968, the DRC banned mining from the works available to children under 18 since it is liable to “thwart their health and carry a special risk of accident”<sup>50</sup> (UN CRC, 2000: 53). This is in line with ILO standards that classify mining as hazardous work, meaning:

*“Work that is conducted underground or under water, work done at heights or in confined spaces, work that involves using dangerous equipment or tools, work that is carried out in unhealthy environments or involves hazardous substances, or any work carried out in particularly difficult circumstances.*

*Working excessive hours or being confined to an employer’s premises, transporting heavy loads or having to work at night are also included”.* (ILO, 2004: 46).

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Despite these conventions and regulations, mining remains an unregulated, controversial, and contested sector in DRC, and it includes various types of mines: militia-controlled pits, multinational-owned mines, and ASM.

Much concern has been expressed on the first type of mine as the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour reported “security forces and armed groups used forced child labour in Ituri District and South Kivu Province, [...] including re-recruited child soldiers as forced mine workers” (United States Bureau of Democracy, 2006:sec.6/d). This situation provoked also the reaction of the UN Security Council that condemned it in its Report S/2003/1027 calling for mining regulation. In this context, children are fully exploited: they are illegally employed by armed forces and they are also underpaid since they receive “less than 10 percent of the pay adults received for the same production” (Kabel, 2004:481).

Mines owned and managed by multinational corporations (MNCs) are extremely controlled and little information has been divulged. Nevertheless, the collaboration of MNCs with the rebels in the forced displacements of people of 1999 has been reported together with the employment of locals under enslaving conditions (Kabel, 2004). Nowadays, the privately-owned mines are almost not present in the territory of Maniema as explained by Chuma Yafali, Minister of Economy, Mines, and Energy of the Province of Maniema:

*“[...] I could say the number of mining companies but unluckily, we still don’t have companies that are installed here”.*

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With the dissolution of the mining company SOMINKI in 1996, and the acquisition of its gold concessions by the Canadian mining trust BANRO, the tin concessions passed under the control of SAKIMA, which was invested with a role of guardian. As a consequence of this,

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<sup>50</sup> Together with the extraction of minerals there are also contacts with machines or mechanism while running, driving of motors, vehicles and machines (ibid.).

there was a widespread liberalization of mining that saw thousands of people (who used to practise agriculture or work for SOMINKI) pouring into the pits to have money by artisanal exploitation. This is how the phenomenon of ASM started up and nowadays it is so widespread that it accounts for 80% to 100% of domestic mineral production but “since ASM is largely part of the DRC’s informal economy, its contribution to formal economic accumulation is minimal” (Garrett Nicholas, 2008:79). However, the mining industry remains a leading sector in the DRC and the economic development reported by the IMF in 2007 was largely attributed to recoveries in mining and manufacturing (Europa Publications Limited., 2009:339,340).

For security reasons, as well as limitation in my fieldworker’s budget, it was impossible for me to access these first two types of mines and I therefore decided to focus my attention on child labourers employed in ASM.

#### **4.5. Working conditions**

*“Children go deep underground in tunnels only as wide as their bodies...  
Children haul loads of coal that weigh more than they do...  
Children sit for long hours in the sun, pounding boulders into road gravel...  
Children use their hands to work gold out of rocks using toxic mercury...  
Children squat the whole day in water, sifting through sand for a precious  
gem...”*. (International Labour Organization)

A few months ago, I was perusing my fieldwork diary and at one point, I came across a note I made in which I mentioned a particular day of interviews that I defined as one of the most difficult ones (since seasonal rains had made it hard to reach the excavation site), as well as one of the most interesting ones, since my attention was taken by a double-sided image I had not noticed during my previous visits to the mine: the incongruity of children working as adults and their childish clumsy way of mastering adult tools.

Children were using shovels taller than themselves and basins wider than three of them put together. At that very moment, the difference between a shovel in the hands of a child and a shovel in the hands of an adult was striking, and the different size that the basin seemed to acquire on the head of a child and on the head of an adult was so visible that mining seemed to be even more at odds with children, than I had ever considered before. I was pervaded by a deep feeling of injustice: children had been obliged to grow up faster than they should and I looked at them as deprived of the intimately personal and irrevocable status of childhood.

I deem this image to be important at this stage, because it is a practical example of the concepts of structural and direct oppression and gives a concrete image of how mining is unjust and unscrupulous to children. Child miners often receive from adults a bucket of sand to sieve which sometimes does not contain gold, obliging children to go home with empty hands (McGreal, 2008). Children who dig for minerals represent a massive labour force which is invisible: no record is kept, no official paper is issued on their illegal employment, nor any other type of trace on them exists, despite their essential role in the economy.

The interviewed children who worked in the ASM of Kalima and Kiabombua constituted 30-35% of the total labour force in the mines, which can be of two types:

- a) Open-air pits where minerals are near the surface and miners remove the overlying soil digging wide holes (maximum 5 meters deep), but they do not go underground.
- b) Underground pits where minerals are very deep and their extraction requires the construction of tunnels. The maximum depth allowed by Congolese Mining Code is 60 meters but often there are no controls and the population digs deeper than 60 meters facing high risks.

The mines visited in the DRC were mainly open-air pits and were all located in isolated areas distant from main urban centres but at a walking distance from the villages (5-10 km). In spite of this remoteness, I noticed a peculiar paradox. On one side the local population is abandoned and the lack of any official control and welfare intervention are palpable, but on the other side, three times a week it is possible to hear the roar of Russian Antonov airplanes landing in the dusty unpaved tarmac of the villages, coming with goods and food supplies, and leaving with huge bags of coltan, cassiterite, and gold. Locals are used to this “air traffic” and often rush to the landing strip to see the plane landing in dust clouds and to earn some money since those who own a bike or a motorbike can transport minerals to the tarmac and then go back to the village with the goods that arrived, getting paid by traders or shop owners.

#### **4.5.1. Mine access**

In Kalima and Kampene, children access the mine easily during weekdays due to the lack of formal control. On the other hand, on weekends it is forbidden to go working since Saturday is the day of *salgono* – communitarian work aimed at rehabilitating or improving areas of the village – and Sunday is the day of God and people are supposed to participate to church services from early morning. It is therefore possible to see security forces (including mining policemen) at the entrance of the mines or on the way to the mines to prevent anyone from entering.

Children usually arrive in the mine in the morning, they leave the village early and walk in couples or groups, carrying the working tools on their heads and talking loudly since the forest they have to go through is thick and they might be left behind. The distance they walk is roughly between 6 and 12 km one way. Once arrived in the mines, children immediately start working as will be explained in the following section.

#### **4.5.2. Work Organization**

Artisanal extraction in Kalima and Kampene was organized in two main ways, autonomous and dependent. For child miners, completely autonomous work does not exist because they are normally assigned to a pit where other miners are working and they have to share it. The hope of being assigned to a good pit which contains a lot of “yellow material” is widespread and mixed with the dream of finding a high value gold nugget to hide from the eyes of the mine owners or bosses, in order to sell it on the black market at a high price. In both types of work, some children pay a certain sum of money to enter the mine that varies from 100 FC to 500 FC per day<sup>51</sup>.

Regarding autonomous work, as soon as children arrive on the site and get a pit, they divide the tasks among themselves and start working on their own. Usually older boys (>14) carry out the toughest activities, such as digging the ground with the shovel and pouring the soil into the sieves, whilst the younger ones sieve the sand and carry water that is used to clean the sand. The gold they find is their property and the majority of children sell it directly to the *preneurs* located outside the mine, and bring the money home.

Nevertheless, some “autonomous” child miners do not take charge of the selling of gold for two principal reasons. First of all, because children know that their selling power is lower than that of adults. Thus, *preneurs* can take advantage from buying gold from them at a lower price than they should. This was explained by a child miner in Kiabombua:

*M – [...]Who sells the gold?*  
*C – I give it to Chance who manages it.*  
*M – Why?*  
*C – ‘Coz he gets more out of it...*  
[Child miner, 15 – Kampene]

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The second reason why children do not sell directly, is because they are told to bring home whatever they find and give it to elder relatives who take charge of the selling:

*M – Who do you sell the gold to?*  
*C – My elder brother sells it for me.*

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<sup>51</sup> Respectively corresponding to 0,10 € and 0,50 €. Some of my respondents reported paying money to dig.

*M – So you don't get the money for it...*

*C – No, no, I do, he gives me some money after the selling.*

[Child miner, 16 – Kampene]

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Dependent work differs from autonomous in several aspects. First of all, children work with/for adults (relatives or bosses) rather than with fellow children. Secondly, rather than autonomously dividing the tasks, children receive instructions from adults. Tasks can vary from transporting sand and water to buying food when the person the child works with is hungry. The earnings of children who work dependently mainly stem from these services they do for the adults. Moreover, children can supplement their income when grownups give them a bucket of already sieved sand in which there might still be some gold nuggets, as explained by this child miner<sup>52</sup>:

*C – [...]Sometimes, someone gives me some used sand that I can sieve so I might find some gold in it.*

[Child miner, 15 – Kampene]

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#### **4.5.3. “The Lubokela Story”**

Within dependent work there is also another way of organizing activities. It refers to those children who work for a boss who is not employed in the mines but who manages the work from the outside. It is the case of a group of seven children aged 10 - 17 that I met in the mine next to the village of Muchuyuku who were working for a local man called Lubokela. Children referred to their relationship with Lubokela as business. I regard this definition as symptomatic of the exploitation of children, and I want to analyze the role distribution in this “Lobokela story” in more detail, by reporting an extract from the interview with the children:

*M – Who discovered this place first?*

*C – A man who lives in the village, Lubokela.*

*M – Do you have to pay him in order to get the permit to dig here?*

*C – We pay a little bit to him.*

*M – How much?*

*C – Well, since we work with him, we share the gold we find. When we share, he gets a surplus and that is what we pay to him: we leave to him a part of our gold.*

*M – Hence, according to the quantity you find, you divide.*

[Translator – Firstly they share equally, then Lubokela gets his surplus].

*M – And then, with the gold you find, you sell it?*

*C – Well, we sell the gold altogether and then we share the money equally.*

*M – And is it the owner of this place who sells?*

*C – No, we children sell altogether in order to have transparency among us. Lubokela gets his share in gold before we sell.*

[Child miner, 16 – village of Muchuyuku]

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<sup>52</sup> This activity is called *Pakatcha* and will be better explained in section 4.5.2. on the Working Methods.

It is interesting to notice how the children talk about Lubokela as if he was their business partner, rather than boss or supervisor. They talk about shares, dividing gold, transparency, and selling, without considering the fact that Lubokela earns more than them without digging, and being protected from charges for exploitation of child labour, since he acts from behind the scenes.

This attitude is embedded in what I defined as structural oppression in section 3.1.2. which is a sort of mechanism of injustice built into the society and reproduced over and over. What can be understood if we read carefully the “Lubokela story” is that children are in a *pre-conscientização* phase in which they do not perceive the social, political and economic contradictions yet. On the contrary, they accept an uneven sharing of earnings in which they actually cooperate. Maybe one day, the Lubokela children will realize how unfair their employment is and will go through the *conscientização* process reaching a new level of awareness, knowledge, and active participation.

#### **4.5.4. Working Environment and Schedules**

The first mines visited in Kalima were coltan and cassiterite extraction sites. After riding a few kilometres by motorbike from the village, we stopped along the road and from there we started walking in the green, impenetrable, and damp forest. Only after a while we spotted the first miners. We stopped to talk with them. They were two brothers of 13 and 7 years old. They were part of a family of 8 and their parents were old and unable to work. The older boy started to dig when he was 7 years old in order to pay his school fees. Now, since his brother turned 7 and wanted to go to school, he also had to learn how to do the job. Their working schedule was from 6:30 a.m. till “when we find enough”, as they explained:

*M – Can you describe me a typical day here?*

*C – If we plan to come here to the excavation site, we get up very early, at 6:00. First of all we wash our faces, then, if we have something for breakfast we eat, and then we come here. We arrive around 06:30 – 07:00 and we start digging till when we find enough.*

[Child miner, 13 - Kalima]

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Their working environment was completely immersed in the forest and we found them only because they were talking. They generally work in a group so they are not afraid when darkness comes and can sell the minerals at a better price when they go all together to the *preneurs*.

This is but one story out of the 46 that children told during fieldwork. Likewise, there are many other children in the same situation, some of them do not have families, others live in



the mine where they work and spend the night in the rainforest, which is not a safe place by



definition. In picture 2, a hut where some children live in the mine next to the village of Muchuyuku. The mining sites, which are not equipped for hosting miners, and least of all children, are even more dangerous than the forest itself. It is not rare to fall in the pits covered in dense brown water (picture 3), or to slip on the unsteady ground, or to sink in the mud that covers the whole mining area, or to fall in one of the holes dug in the past and then covered by the fast growing vegetation.



Children wear no protective clothing and they actually work with as few clothes as possible due to the high temperatures and the humidity of the forest. Indeed, while approaching

the mine near the village of Muchuyuku, I had to wait behind the bushes before accessing the working area since children were naked and they had to put on their clothes. No helmets or gloves are used, nor ropes to secure those who go down the hole. Finally, children wear no shoes because it is easier to maintain equilibrium on bare feet while moving around the marshy mine.

Working schedules differ according to the period of the year and to whether the child goes to school or not. Children who do not attend school are employed full-time in the mine, whilst children who attend school work part time (14:00 till 18:00) during school days and full-time (10 hours per day from sunrise to sunset) on weekends and during summer holidays (June - September), as explained by this child miner in Kalima:

*M – Can you please explain me better how you organize your work here in the mine?*

*C – During school days, I work in the afternoons and, if I manage<sup>53</sup>, also on Sundays because the mines are my means for living and paying school fees.*

[Child miner, 13 - Kalima]

Extraction is never carried out during evenings or nights because it would be impossible to see gold nuggets due to the lack of electricity. Many children finish working slightly before sunset in order to have enough time to go back to the village since they do not want to be caught by the darkness in the middle of the forest.

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<sup>53</sup> By saying “if I manage” the child refers to the difficulty of accessing the mines during weekends as explained in section 4.5.1.

#### 4.5.5. Working Methods

Every day, millions of children crawl into underground mines or dig with their bare hands in open-air pits where working conditions are hazardous and childhood does not represent a condition for “special” treatment. Minors particularly crowd the mines during school holidays when they work every day to save money for paying school fees. Children who are employed in the mines normally combine this activity with other family-related duties such as farming, breeding, child-minding, etc.

The mines of Kalima and Kampene are artisanal mines meaning that exploitation is non-industrial and excavations are carried out without machinery or any other technological tool. Artisanal mining generally occurs within existing and dismantled industrial concessions and the mining zones are therefore located in those areas where “industrial exploitation is deemed to be unfeasible” (De Koning, 2009:6). It is in the artisanal extraction that the majority of children are employed mainly because it is a subsistence type of extraction and it does not require particular skills (besides strength) since it is done manually. The job is generally learnt through the everyday observation that starts when children are very young (6-7 years old) and accompany their parents, relatives, or elder brothers to the mine and are normally assigned to side-tasks (e.g. food fetching). This continuous exposure to the digging makes this activity become a normal gesture children get used to, as explained by this child miner:

*M – What is exactly your activity here?*

*C – I do pakatcha, meaning sieving what the others already sieved.*

*M – Who taught you how to do it?*

*C – I learnt alone, looking at the others.*

[Child miner, 11 - Kampene]

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This way of learning reflects the already mentioned spirit of *débrouillardise*: each child has to fend for himself and learn how to do a job is part of the growing up process, and this is widespread in the DRC, as well as in many other African countries.

There are two main working methods that miners employ and both are quite rudimentary:

- 1) The first one is the *hydraulic mining* that is mainly carried out along and/or inside rivers or holes covered in water. There are several techniques used in *hydraulic mining*. One is creating small barriers in the stream (e.g. with rocks, picture 4), so that the mineral that is heavier stays, and the sand that is lighter flushes away with the water. The second technique is placing a tree trunk full of sand in the middle of the stream where water flushes (picture 5). Miners mix the sand together with the water till the heavy mineral settles on the bottom of the trunk and it can be collected. The last technique is the *pakatcha* and consists in mixing water and sand inside basins till the ore rests at the bottom (picture 6).



2) The second technique is *dry mining* (picture 7), which requires more strength than hydraulic mining since there is not the force of water that helps cleaning the sand, but it is the miner himself who has to smash the rocks for extracting the mineral. The equipment that children use include a shovel (to make the hole), a machete (to fragment the rocks), and some leaves in which the mineral is wrapped and then transported to the buyer.



Children generally carry out three tasks as observed in the ASM of Kalima and Kampene:

*Pakatcha* – this is the most common activity for youths in hydraulic mining and it consists in sieving the sand that others sieved before. This activity is also called “*cocorat*” and is particularly common among young miners (6 to 12). *Pakatcha* requires children to fill the basin with “second-hand sand”, crouching over the water so that the water enters in the basin while they mix with circular movements. Since this task involves staying bent for long time, the shorter a person is, the better, hence, small children are usually assigned to this task. Little by little while sieving, heavy materials deposit on the bottom of the basin while sand and water keep flowing in and out of the basin. At the end, children will find only heavy sediments on the bottom of the basin, among which there might be some gold. *Pakatcha* is a child activity by definition, especially in dependent work, as explained in section 4.5.2. on the work organization.

*Porteur* – this second task is usually common among boys aged above 12 who function as porters in hydraulic mining. Children are in charge of transporting water and sand up and down the mine for cleaning and sieving. Being a *porteur* is a tough and difficult job. Children load water or sand in the basin, they are then helped by others to position the basin on their bare heads, and they finally walk fast to the pit where they work to empty the basin. Whether it is a short or long route they walk, children seem to perform as tightrope walkers, since their legs tremble due to the weight of the bucket and they continuously move their necks left and right in order to balance the basin on their heads. They hold the basket with one hand and counter balance the weight with the other arm slightly distant from their body and in perpetual

motion to ensure equilibrium. Their pace is fast and even, and they walk all the way with lifted chin and down-looking eyes since they have to dodge branches of trees, holes, logs, rocks, etc.

*Creusers* – this duty is mainly performed by adolescents over 15 years old since it requires lot of strength. The job consists in digging and making holes in the ground, and in the case of dry mining it also includes pulverizing the rock to extract the minerals. In hydraulic mining, *enfants-creusers*<sup>54</sup> shovel the sand out of the pit covered in water and therefore are perpetually soaking in the slimy waters up to their knees. Boys need to be strong enough to press the shovel down into the soil with their bare foot under the water and to get the wet sand out from the bottom of the pit, and pour it into the basin that smaller children are using to sieve. In dry mining, there is no sieving but the extraction is carried out smashing the rocks with a pick and then grinding it with a machete. Dry mining requires lot of tools but often *enfants-creusers* do not have them so they only use the machete<sup>55</sup> for the whole process with a consequent consistent expenditure of energy.

The artisanal working methods are basic and during the personal interview with the Minister of the Mines of the Province of Maniema, he underlined how the working methods are far from being industrial and he actually defined them as rudimentary:

*M – [...] Which is the method of working in the mines?*

*Y – It's so rudimentary. They use the shovel, the pick, the basins, and that's all, and they dig holes [...].*

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Precisely because artisanal miners (including children) carry out an artisanal and small-scale exploitation, their presence in the mines does not worry too much either mine owners or mining authorities or the few dismembered mining companies that are trying to reassemble after their collapse at the end of '90s. These *nouveaux predateurs*<sup>56</sup> let artisanal miners work in the mines of their property or under their jurisdiction sure that artisanal miners, and least of all children, cannot touch primary mineral resources and this ensures them that the minerals hidden below the ground stay there, like a treasure locked in a chest, as explained by the Vice-President of SAKIMA:

*“They can extract because they don't affect our primary resources anyway since they don't have the means to exploit... the artisan, what does he have? He has his shovel, and his plastic basin to clean a small quantity of 1 or 2 kg, this is their exploitation”.*

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<sup>54</sup> Child-diggers.

<sup>55</sup> The machete is the most common tool in dry mining since it is widely used in agriculture and it is easy to find it in open-air markets in the village.

<sup>56</sup> The term literally means the “new predators” and it is intentionally used to recall Colette Breackman's “Les Nouveaux Predateurs”, written in 2003.

#### **4.5.6. Consequences of child labour.**

Since working conditions are highly precarious, children at work generally face higher risks of “having their physiological development hampered” (Kielland and Tovo, 2006:126) and are more exposed to a number of harmful factors such as physical stress, accidents, etc. During the interview with the director of the hospital in Kampene, five main risks were identified.

First of all, the work children do in the mines exceeds their muscular force by far, with a direct consequence on their development and growing process. Indeed, in the mines it is common to see short children with big muscles, this is due to their hard work: the heavy weights they have to lift, the heavy baskets they carry on their heads, and the lifting of wet sand with the shovel.

Hard work presents a risk in itself and it worsens when food is inadequate. Indeed, the second risk identified is the lack of energy, especially in the long run. This is because the job children do is too hard compared to their calories’ intake. Their diet is inadequate to their calories consumption, it is poor in proteins and carbohydrates and does not compensate the energy loss of the children<sup>57</sup>. Many of them would not take breakfast until about ten in the morning and often they have both breakfast and lunch in the mining site, where hygienic conditions are precarious and food contamination is highly probable (Torimiro, 2009:75).

The third issue is the presence of dusts in the dry-mining areas. These dusts are inhaled by children and can cause respiratory pathologies such as various types of pneumoconiosis.

The fourth risk is linked to the accidents (e.g. mud-slides and falls). Children frequently hurt themselves with tools they are too young and uncoordinated to handle (Kielland and Tovo, 2006:128), and since wounds often go untreated, they run the risk of getting infections, especially in feet and hands which are highly exposed (see pictures 8 and 9 below).



Picture 8



Picture 9

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<sup>57</sup> The issue of “working too hard” with a consequent imbalance between caloric intake and calories burn has been analysed also by Kielland and Tovo (2006:126).

There is also the risk of bad domestic healing of injuries that can create further infections especially for those wounds treated too late. Accidents become even more dangerous since no protective equipment is provided for child-miners.

The final concern expressed by Doctor Flory regards the psychiatric/psychological pathologies connected to the life-style that children conduct in the mines. Not only can self-esteem be inadequately developed, but children may tend to develop distrust in institutions, personal insecurity<sup>58</sup> and disciplinary problems as explained by the director of a primary school in Kalima:

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*“We’ve students with a very bad school conduct. We try to talk to them, to ask them questions on where he or she spent the school holidays and many answer that they went to dig for cassiterite or gold. Hence, they come back with a difficult conduct. We try to make them aware of all this, to talk to them, to support them psychologically, but we see that this is difficult, extremely difficult. [...] Some do not want to listen to us and this always generates troubles [...]”.*

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Another worry expressed by Doctor Flory concerned the promiscuity of the mines where there are many women and early marriages are common:

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*“In the mines the main activities are digging and women. This creates a sexual obsession and promiscuity that also has consequences on the child’s health”.*

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Many other consequences can be identified, such as negative effects on the education of children, sexual abuse, maltreatment and harmful discipline from masters. Some of these issues will be analysed in section 4.6.1. in reference to the consequences of a functioning state.

#### ***4.6. From the Inside: Self-Perception.***

This section deals with the self-perceptions of children. As I mentioned in the introduction, current research on the theme of child labour often focuses on the causes and consequences of child labour leaving aside children’s perspectives. Sometimes, studies on this theme are designed with a top-down approach and gather information from easily accessible informants (mainly administrative offices, NGOs, etc.). Far from saying that these sources of information are not valuable (I myself turned to them for collecting data), this section would rather argue that a very important point of view is that of children and therefore the following sections 4.6.1. and 4.6.2. will deal respectively with self-perception of children, and with their future aspirations.

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<sup>58</sup> However, some of the interviewed children in Kalima and Kampene expressed satisfaction for their job seen as an opportunity to help out their families making them feel useful.

#### **4.6.1 Rossatto: A model for analyzing self-perceptions of exposed groups.**

Starting from the statement that no child wished to be a miner, self-perception as well as the perception about their job, varied significantly among child miners. For analysing the interviews with children, I employed the classification model of personal perspectives designed by Rossatto (2005) whose point of departure is Freire's Pedagogy of Possibility and Pedagogy of the Oppressed as outlined in section 3.1.3.

Following Freirean perspectives, Rossatto designed a "Freirean Mapping of Optimism and Desire" (2005:47) that classifies personal perspectives into four categories: blind optimism, fatalistic optimism, resilient optimism, and transformative optimism. With the exception of blind optimism<sup>59</sup>, all the other three categories were identified among child-miners in Kalima and Kampene. I shall now outline the meaning of these perspectives adding another perspective that I have identified and that I called antagonism. In order to clarify these perceptions, I shall refer to the answers given by child-miners in DRC.

The first perspective that I will outline is **antagonism** towards the job. It refers to an attitude of dislike and hostility for the activity, as these child miners working in the dry extraction of cassiterite in Kalima explained:

*M – Do you like this job?*

*C – No, we only work here because we've no choice.*

*M – So, you don't like it here...*

*C – No, no... it's because we're obliged, if we could choose we wouldn't do it. We do this only because in schools we're required to pay some money.*

[Child miners, 14 and 15 - Kalima]

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These two brothers did not like mining at all and they explained to me that they felt it as an imposition from their family who required them to go somewhere working to get some money for paying their school, otherwise they had to quit studies. The two brothers were part of a family of 12 and they told me that each sibling had to find his own way to fend for himself<sup>60</sup> if he or she wanted to pursue education. For them, mining was the option. Another example of antagonism is this child miner aged 15 who accused poverty for his situation:

*M – When did you start working here?*

*C – I started when I was 13 [...]*

*M – Are you happy to be here?*

*C – Not really, poverty pushes me but if I could choose I wouldn't come here.*

[Child miner, 15 - Kampene]

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<sup>59</sup> Naïve embracement of hard work without awareness of the purpose of that work. Blind optimism fails to see the "social importance and urgency of developing images about the future [...], which is a form or a state of denial" (Rossatto, 2005:49).

<sup>60</sup> *Se débrouiller.*

The day I met this child he was upset because he had just heard that the ‘Service for Mining Control’ wanted children to pay some “*frais*”<sup>61</sup>, like adults. The child thought it was unfair to make children who study pay since up to that moment students did not pay to dig.

The second – and in my interviews, the most recurrent perspective - is **fatalistic optimism** and it mainly refers to an “immobilizing acceptance of an alienating reality and a dismal future, in one sense a kind of anti-optimism” (Rossatto, 2005:57). Children having this attitude accepted with subdued passivity the job they were doing (and the future consequences of it) as it was the only option they had in a belief that events, especially future, are fixed (ibid.). The fatalism with which they approached their situation became a self-fulfilling aspiration as part of a plan *imposed from above* they could not interfere with, as explained by this child:

*M – Why did you choose the mine?*  
*C – Well, God decided it...*  
*M – Come on, it’s not God who decided, it is you.*  
*C - ... .. [silence]*  
[Child miner, 15 - Kampene]

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Alongside with this attitude of resignation, fatalistic optimism also includes the concept of optimism as hopefulness and confidence about the future (Oxford University Press, 2005), however always referred to an external, invisible, almighty hand. A good example of this are the words of the following child miner who sees the future as an award from God that he will receive if he behaves properly<sup>62</sup>:

*M – Do you think you will have a good job by working here in the mines?*  
*C – It’s up to God. It’s God who will award me and if God wants I will be a valuable man.*  
[Child miner, 14 - Kalima]

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Both previous quotations mirror the resignation of children to an invisible external intervention that decided for them (first quotation), and that will decide for them whether to enhance their potential as future citizens or not (second quotation). These children perceived themselves as products and constructs of a predetermined destiny and this self-perception was common to many other respondents.

The third type of perception spread among children was **resilient optimism** and it refers to “the conformation to normative order or alienating realities as a means of achieving a desired individualistic goal” (Rossatto, 2005:69). In this context I will substitute the sentence

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<sup>61</sup> Fees.

<sup>62</sup> This quotation recalls the dichotomy between the Chosen Ones and the Unchosen Ones, the chosen heading for salvation, the unchosen for damnation (Galtung 1996:202).



“achieving a desired individualistic goal” with “realizing a dream” or “improving life conditions”, in an attempt to mitigate the first statement, which in my opinion is too harsh and inappropriate for defining a child’s aspiration. Indeed, some children saw in mining the possibility of achieving a brighter future since it is remunerative and ensures better income<sup>63</sup> as explained by this child:

*M – Are you happy?*  
*C – Yes, I’m very happy.*  
*M – Also with this job?*  
*C – Yes, because I find something.*  
[Child miner, 12 - Kampene]

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A further deepening of resilient optimism in relation to future aspirations of children will be given in the following section 4.6.2. when discussing children’s future.

Finally, the last attitude identified was **transformative optimism** which concerns a “transformative resistance against those social processes that produce alienating realities” (Rossatto, 2005:81). The definition that Rossatto gives is very complex and articulated and it includes both hope for emancipation from repressive socioeconomic structures, as well as personal direct participation of the oppressed in the collective process of social change (ibid.). For child miners, transformative optimism took a simplistic form, meaning that some children expressed hope for a change through their individual choices that might lead to a better future, like this child who decided to travel to a bigger city where schools were available:

*M – Do you like it here?*  
*C – No, not really, but that’s the only thing I can do.*  
*M – What would you like to do in 10 years?*  
*C – [...] Let’s say doctor.*  
*M – Do you think that if you keep working here you will become a doctor?*  
*C – No, that’s why on Monday I will leave for Kindu. This is my last week here.*  
[Child miner, 15 - Kampene]

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However, despite these sporadic glimmers of hope, transformative optimists were rare and far from including their involvement as part of an emancipatory process within a context of collective effort towards liberation and transformation.

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<sup>63</sup> However, improvements in life conditions are relative (confined to finances), and of short-term since a one-day earning would completely vanish in a couple of hours just for food supply, cigarettes, few clothes, and only sometimes school fees.

#### 4.6.2 What future?

While conducting interviews in the ASM of Kalima and Kampene, I was frequently asking children about their future aspirations. Once back to Europe, I immersed myself in the readings and little by little, page after page, I realized how important the answers given by children on their future were, how their answers were going beyond a simple “I’d like to...”. I realized that their dreams, their aspirations, and even their non-responses concealed a massive amount of information useful to explain various concepts such as legitimization of myths or fatalistic optimism. Hence, in this section, I shall report quotations from few interviewed children to emphasize these two points which are related to oppression and I consider relevant to the thesis.

The first issue I would like to treat is legitimizing myths. I decided to start with this because it appeared to be the most crucial one and it is in some ways the hardest to comprehend: why does a child who suffered wrongdoing from an adult actually aim at being like him? Freire explains that “at a certain point in the existential experience, the oppressed adopt an attitude of ‘adherence’ to the oppressor” (1972:22). This will of sharing the oppressor’s way of life becomes particularly relevant if we consider child miners who are employed by adults and still want at any cost to “resemble the oppressor, to imitate him, to follow him” (ibid.:38) as explained by this child miner met in Kiabombua:

*M – What would you like to be in 10 years?*

*C – [...] I’d like to have a role of responsibility, like Mining Area Chief, or like XXXX<sup>64</sup> who is the Chief of GEMICO.*

[Child miner, 12 - Kiabombua]

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The result of this is nothing but the spiral reproduction of the hegemonic and oppressive social order (Rossatto, 2005:69) in which oppressed “do not perceive themselves as opposites of the oppressors, and they aspire to the identification with their opposites (oppressors)” (Freire, 1972:22), rather than to their liberation. Children saw their personal accomplishment in becoming oppressors because they have no consciousness of themselves as part of an oppressed group yet (they are in the *pre-conscientização* phase).

Freire used the term “irresistible attraction towards the oppressor and his way of life” (ibid.:38) and this can also be seen as an aspect embedded in the local culture which to some extent reproduces a system of oppression. Indeed, in the local rural contexts of both Kalima and Kampene, those “with the money” and those “respected” are people engaged either in politics or in mineral trade. These are the models of success and the only posts that guarantee

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<sup>64</sup> For reasons of privacy, I did not report the name of the person who manages the mining company GEMICO.

a dignified life style ensuring a relative economic security. People holding these offices are the examples to imitate and thus it is not hard to imagine how avidly a child dreams to reach such power positions, seen as the only way to have a decent life and to gain respect. The following table reports the answers of children to the question regarding their future aspirations:

	<b>Child aspirations</b>	<b>N° children</b>	<b>%</b>
1°	Position of authority	16	35
2°	Doctor	12	26
3°	No answer	6	13
4°	Teacher	4	9
5°	Mechanic	3	6,5
6°	Fate	3	6,5
7°	Pilot	1	2
8°	Priest	1	2
	<b>TOT</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

In reproducing this table, I do not claim to draw statistically generalizable conclusions, but I think it is important because from it, it can be easily noticed that the majority of children wished to hold positions of authority legitimizing their myths and emulating their oppressors. Indeed, the so-called “position of authority” included: President of the Republic, Minister of Economy, Education or Mines, Governor, Prefect, and Chief of Mine. The second most popular aspiration was to be a doctor and all answers actually refer to the specific context of Kampene. Children probably had taken the doctor as model of reference since the village hospital was managed by a charismatic doctor, Doctor Flory, who was one of my most valuable respondents, and was highly respected by the people, who considered him at the same level of *chefs du village* and other local traditional authorities. Interesting (and rather dispiriting as well) is that the third most common answer is “no answer”: a sign of low self-esteem and lack of external inputs able to stimulate creativity, as will be explained in few lines. Legitimizing myths goes beyond the emulation tendency described above and it contributes to form a set of:

*“attitudes, values, beliefs, stereotypes, and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for the social practices that distribute social value within the social system”* (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999:45).

This justifies social inequality and the hierarchy-enhancing attitudes are actually group-supported (i.e. racism, sexism, classism, nationalism, etc...) (ibid.:46). All this harks back to the idea that each individual occupies a specific position in the social ranking because he or she has earned it and therefore deserves it. Hardly strange, this recalls exactly the words of the fourteen year-old miner reported few pages back:

*C – It's up to God. It's God who will award me and if God wants I will be a valuable man.*

[Child miner, 14 - Kalima]

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The second issue I would like to deal with is the conception of the future as if it was an intangible destiny out of the child's control. This is embedded in the fatalistic optimism analysed in the previous section. The particular conception of fate can be noticed from the answer of this child who releases himself to providence rather than reacting and acting:

*M – What would you like to be in 10 years?*

*C – I don't know.*

*M – Come on, a dream you have...*

*C - ... .. [silence and he looked at me strangely like I was asking a difficult question].*

*M – Let's imagine that you have to think about yourself in 10 years, what do you see?*

*C – ... .. [few seconds pass] I don't know ...*

*M – No idea?*

*C – ... .. No ...*

[Child miner, 12 - Kampene]

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Maybe in this specific case the shyness and discretion of the child, together with the lack of external stimulus and inputs<sup>65</sup>, is the main cause of such a blank answer, rather than the child's lack of imagination and creativity. Still, this shows how the environment created around those children tends to reproduce apathy rather than creativity, resignation rather than action. Despite this, children are engaged in so many “multifaceted social, cultural, and economic activities that demonstrate tremendous creativity in making a living in a climate of conflict and social instability” (De Boeck, 2004:156). What ought to be done is to promote what Freire called cultural revolution, as has been discussed by Mayo, who focused on consciousness-raising and liberating education (2004:60). Also one of my respondents, Prof. N'Sanda, made reference to the need of a revolution:

*“I say to myself that we need a mental revolution that should start from youth. I think that for us, the teachers, we've to inject this to young people, we've to inject the seed that can give the fruit of a real revolution. But it's hard, I tell you [...]. Sharing among youth can represent the trigger of a real mental revolution. We need a mental revolution. We cannot go on like this. And the revolution resides in young people”.*

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Prof. N'Sanda talks about a mental revolution rather than making reference to the cultural revolution, and this seems to be a deep concept since it refers to a meditative path that starts from the inside of a person, and then spreads to the outside, affecting the others and the society.

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<sup>65</sup> The lack of external stimulus and inputs can be directly attributed both to the central government and to the local administrations that fail in designing projects and programmes for children/youths .I will discuss this in more detail in section 4.7.

#### **4.7. Lack of a functioning State**

*“The child has a right to education. The State shall make primary education compulsory and free, encourage the organization of different forms of secondary education and make them accessible to every child, and make higher education accessible to all on the basis of the capacities of each individual” (Kayira, 2009:10,11).*

Living in a country that has been at war for more than 10 years does not sound as an easy task. Despite the peace agreement of 2002, disorders and killings persisted and also nowadays in the eastern part of the country, violence continues especially in relation to the looting of minerals, as explained by a psycho-social educator who heads a primary school in DRC:

*“All this happens because of the wars that we had and that continue and give to people the sole possibility of going to the mines and dig; and the money is used to buy weapons [...] War continues to do this, and it is the small ones, the katogo<sup>66</sup>, who do this for their lords”.*

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Indeed, as explained in section 4.5. on the working conditions, children represent a sizeable labour force in artisanal extraction which is neither controlled nor regulated by enterprises, nor by governmental authorities. Alongside this vacuum of supervision and security measures, many incidents occur and institutions take no accountability. Many incidents involve children since they are the ones going inside small holes to dig and because they are often unaware of the dangers in the mine and underestimate them. The Minister of the Mines of Maniema talked about these unfortunate accidents when I interviewed him:

*“There are sites where at less than 30 cm there’s already production but in Kailo, for example, they have to dig more than 60 meters but this is strictly forbidden by law. And this is why in Kailo there are always accidents. A month does not pass without the loss of a person who unluckily dies in those pits that the administration already closed, but they go to dig during evenings, nights, and early mornings, and that’s how it happens”.*

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When those accidents occur, the central administration does not respond since the area is off its jurisdiction and it figures as officially closed. However, no controls are carried around the closed pits mainly because “state mining authorities do not have the power and the means to stop illegal exploitation” (De Koning, 2009:2), as explained by the Minister of the Mines of Maniema:

*Y - Because we’re limited, not only in means, meaning economic and financial means, but mainly on the number of qualified agents. [...] it’s not me who can recruit [...] there’s the General Secretariat that recruits.*

*M – The General Secretariat?*

*Y – Yes, in Kinshasa [...].*

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<sup>66</sup> *Katogo* means “small ones” in Swahili.

This reflects the incapacity of stopping unlawful exploitation and the strong dependence on the central government that is a sort of ‘leftover’ inherited from the *Mobutist* era, as Professor N’Sanda – Chancellor of the University of Moyen Lualaba (Kalima), explained:

*“It [Mobutism] was a total dictatorship, meaning that it was aimed not only at impoverishing people but also at making up a mentality [...]. Mobutism is the real dictatorship. It’s the attack to men, not only physically but also mentally. Today, [...] we changed the country and we became a Democratic Republic with [...] a Governor who still has that type of mentality that if he wants to do something here, he needs to receive orders from Kinshasa. As a consequence of this, some things here are completely gone [...] because he is waiting dispositions from Kinshasa”.*

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To me, all this sounded strange, obsolete, and unjust and I posed myself few questions: what are the consequences of this lack of a functioning state for child-miners? What happens to them in such a crystallized, inert and sketchy state? I shared these dilemmas with the coordinator of a local NGO, who is also a prominent African writer and this was his answer:

*“To explain this, I would refer to the “bad governance” and to the fact that Congo is not managed at all. From the head to the feet: the State is absent, public authorities are absent. Absent means that they are not accountable for the population, therefore we’ve children in the streets and in the mines because nobody takes care of them. Children can be killed, people can die in the mines but nobody takes care of this. Authorities are absent. But they are strongly present at the repression level, exploitation of citizens, duping public investments! Authorities are there to get their honours and the consequences of it: fortune and richness. Here, authorities are present and visible, they’re present when they need to sign agreements with whoever if they get back prestige, power, and money; even if it is against their country: here they’re present”.*

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Taking this account as a starting point, it is evident that the critical factor is not so much the absence of the Congolese state, but rather its interested and partial involvement in public policy. This is even more worrying than the absence of state, since authorities are purposely intervening only in paying-off activities, and do not take any responsibility towards people.

Authorities should take care of the citizens who put trust in them, children shall be protected and their welfare shall be one of the first priorities of any government in power. However, without a strong political will, there is a risk that the laws on child protection will risk to remain well-intentioned texts on dusty desks. This is why the government’s role is crucial for the improvement of children’s lives and a wide range of consequences stem from what the state does, or indeed for this context, from what the state does not do.

As the saying goes “easier said than done”, the DRC seems to perfectly mirror this. In fact, on the theoretical level, the DRC ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in August 1990 (Ordinance-Law No. 90/48), and it adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as effectuated in Addis Ababa in 1990. However, on the practical

level, the dispositions given by these texts are not applied and their implementation is actually made difficult by a vast set of reasons among which – just to cite a few – geographical vastness, lack of infrastructure, lack of political will, corruption, and presence of some non-state groups who hold the *de facto* power and use it “to influence the *de jure* structures according to their interests at both the central and local levels” (Bhatia and Muggah, 2009:147).

Along with these structural characteristics of failed states, which have been described in sections 3.2. and 3.3., the failure of DRC can be noticed in the incapacity (and unwillingness) of the authorities to act for the benefit of the population (especially children). Failure actually seems to shape the structure of the country towards the perpetuation of acts such as exploitation of children, as explained by the director of the DHPI of Pretoria:

*“The greater the degree of state failure, the greater the exploitation of whoever: of the local population, so children just become even more vulnerable because there’s no one to protect them. And then you have to bring in the economic coercion: to say the greater the suffering of people, the greater the potential for exploiting children. But it could be children in other labours, in prostitution as we see in cities [...] in Africa. The thing of the state is a huge thing and in this country [DRC] the failure of the state is probably one of the worst parts”.*

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This situation sees failure prevailing over the state rather than vice versa, and this inversion could be re-balanced if only the state was able (and willing) to consolidate the rule of law, but the corruption of the state itself legitimates these illegal practices and the change is hard to put in practice.

#### **4.7.1. Consequences of the Lack of a Functioning State**

This section will deal with the consequences of the lack of a functioning state on Congolese child-miners. The consequences that I have identified are five: lack of future critical intellectuals, dehumanization, powerlessness, marginalization, and inversion of roles.

##### **Lack of future critical intellectuals**

One of the main consequences of the non-functioning state is the lack of future critical intellectuals since children who will have access to school facilities will only be those linked to the ruling élite. This makes impossible the *renewal* of intellectuals, thus ensuring the leading group of long-term power and imposition of ideologies since

*“The ideas of the ruling class are [...] the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is therefore the ruling material force of society is, at the same time, its ruling intellectual force”.* (Köylü, 2004:69)

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Limiting access to education aims at making people unaware of their oppressed status, paving the way to those powerful state and non-state actors who aim at gaining power. Cruz wrote “it is easier to manipulate illiterate people than educated people” (2007:106) because by denying education to the “mass”, the development of critical thinking will be blocked. Limited access to education makes it possible to impede the creation of a revolutionary consciousness in people that might rise up in order to change their status. The development of critical thinking has always been (and still is) perceived as a threat from the powerful actors in DRC, as clearly explained by a local Deputy of the Province of Maniema:

*“Mobutu got to power in 1950 and [...] universities had a certain direction that didn’t please Mobutu who decided to create his own system, his own culture, and his own intellectuals. We hence had Mobutist intellectuals and even today, I frankly tell you, we, me included, are making efforts to mentally free ourselves from Mobutism, Mobutu formed Mobutist intellectuals. There is this spirit of Mobutu that continues nowadays”.*

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The incapacity (and unwillingness) of the state to renew the educational system, to propose a creative programme, and to extend free and compulsory primary education to all children will result in the creation of a future unskilled generation of adults “handicapped in human capacity-building” (Torimiro, 2009:78). This negative result obtained from “educational or political action programme which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people” (Freire, 1972:68) represents the exact opposite of the *conscientização* that Freire hoped to attain through education as practice of freedom. If the State fails to understand the structural conditions in which child miners live, and fails in providing education to the youth in school age, those children will be underdogs marginalized from the future intellectual sphere (Galtung, 1996:199) and the “future of the country will be put in danger” (Mulondwa Misenca, 2006:10).

### **Dehumanization**

A second consequence of the weak arm of the State, is a widespread process of dehumanization. Dehumanizing has a double meaning, it refers both to the denial of humanity to those who are oppressed and therefore are in antagonistic relation to oppressors, as well as to the perpetration of a dehumanizing situation “which marks those whose humanity has been stolen, but also – though in a different way – those who have stolen it” (Mayo, 2004:43). This concept is difficult to understand at such theoretical level and perhaps the best way to give a proper explanation is reporting a bit of the interview with the Mining Committee in Kampene:

*M – How do you control the mine?*

*CM – We’ve controllers...*

*M – Controllers don’t seem to work properly, look how many children there are here.*



*CM – Well, the majority of those children are delinquents, everybody kicks them out, even their families, so they come here. [...]*

*M – Yes, but I ask myself, if there are laws, why do you breach them and let children in? [...]*

*CM – It is for a social aim.*

*M – Come on, this is not social at all. Children feel pain on their backs, legs, shoulders, and articulations, they fall ill ... this is not social, come on...*

*CM – Well, those are side-effects...And children have antibodies.*

---

This extract from the interview with the Mining Committee of Kampene gives evidence on how child-miners are debased by being exploited, and more than anything “they are exploited because they are seen as debased” (Galtung, 1996:202). Indeed, one member of the mining committee says that since children have antibodies they can be exploited without any problem. By reducing the scars, the wounds, the pains, to simple “side effects”, these brutal working conditions are discursively described as inconsequential as long as they concern children. Dehumanization can also be noticed when the mining committee defined children as “delinquents”, sent away by their families and social outcasts, reflecting what Freire pointed out in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed: “for the oppressors, it is always the oppressed who are disaffected, violent, barbaric” (1972:32). Facing such a situation, there is the impellent need of a strong state able to put humans at the core, with the humanization of social, political, and economic structures as its goal (Siddhartha, 2005:85). There is the need of giving back dignity to children, giving them back their childhood, and increasing their value not only as children but also as future adults.

### **Powerlessness**

The powerless are “those who lack authority or power [...], those over whom power is exercised” (Young, 1990:56). Powerlessness is a by-product of oppression in which the powerless are usually assigned to tasks collocated at the bottom of the division of labour which usually refer to manual work which allows little opportunity to develop and exercise skills. This is the situation we find among child miners whose development capacities are inhibited and are exposed to “disrespectful treatment because of the status they occupy” (ibid.:58).

This consequence of the non-functioning adrift state, underlines how injustices have further distributional consequences, not only in the division of labour (manual and non-manual work), but also in distributing opportunities equally. A child who is working in the mine, who is told every day what to do and cannot exercise his skills (neither intellectuals nor artistic), is a child without a future. He is a child afflicted by “fear of freedom” (Siddhartha, 2005:86) and lack of choices, which lead him and his family to see the roles of the oppressors

and the oppressed as the only available ones, as explained by the national coordinator of a local NGO:

*“All parents [...] say “what can I do for my child? In this situation, I’m unable to face the needs of my child, I cannot provide him with what he asks, hence, I leave him. I leave him”. And this especially happens when the child has many brothers. [...] This is a problem linked to the fact of being incapable of dealing the situation they face”.*

---

Reading between the lines of this quotation it is possible to see that the degradation of socio-economic structures of the Congolese society mirrors the failure of the State in providing whatever service and political good to its population. This generally makes parents incapable “to take charge of their children” (Mulondwa Misenca, 2006:13), due to the lack of opportunities.

### **Marginalization**

Citizens are marginalized when the “government exercises marginal (or no) control over many parts of society and exerts predatory control over resources” (Cruz, 2007:78). In addition, the incapacity of the failed state to provide resources and opportunities, and the neglect toward communities’ well-being show that the state is virtually absent. People, and especially children, are left alone in many parts of the country and the trust among people and between people and municipal/local institutions collapses. This lack of confidence towards institutions grows more and more as inhabitants see non-state armed and rebel actors thriving and taking control over the areas where the state is absent (Cruz, 2007:91). This taking-over by rebel groups generates “perverse spaces” where the exposure to violence and favourable attitudes toward violence are established (Kayira, 2009:10). What children are experiencing in the DRC is “personal neglect” (Cruz, 2007:76) which creates marginalization meaning that they are considered underdogs who therefore need to be kept on the outside (Galtung, 1996:199). The feeling of abandonment is expressed by this child miner who worked in the dry mining of cassiterite in Kalima:

*M – [...] If you could talk to someone to say that this is not good for you, to whom would you address your complaints?*

*C - I could address my demands to the authorities of the country, but I know that the country doesn’t work good. Even if I address myself to the authorities, they won’t help me, because the government is not responsible for this.*

*[Child miner, 15 – Kalima]*

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From this quotation, it is possible to perceive clearly the personal neglect this child was experiencing. Denial, abandonment, and marginalization were felt even stronger at the moment of the interview; I was standing in front of the child with a tape recorder in front of his mouth, fixing his injured hands fiddling with pebbles, hearing his trembling voice

describing with lucidity his situation, while his head was bowed and his eyes were staring at the ground.

### **Inversion of roles**

In all the mining sites, children defined themselves as *élève-parent* meaning parent-student. This is a widespread phenomenon that exemplifies the inversion of roles which is taking place: children are now those in charge of providing the families with the means for living such as food, clothes, medicines, etc. During the interview with the School Principal of a Secondary School in Kalima, she explained me that there are two types of *élève-parent*. The first category refers to those students (usually above 15 years old) who already have children but they still go to school and have not achieved a complete education yet, so they study and, at the same time, they take care of their families. The second category of *élève-parent* refers to those students who go to school but who also pay their own fees, from this their status of “parent-student”. This latter category includes children from 12 years old (in the case of secondary school) and the majority of children interviewed during fieldwork fall in this last category, as explained by this child miner:

*M – Do you think that your education is compromised because of this job?*

*C – Of course!!! [loud voice]. But I’ve no other choice, I’m harassed: school demands money and where to find it? Hence, I’m what we call élève-parent.*

*M – Élève-parent?*

*C – Yes, because we’re in charge of ourselves.*

[Child miner, 15 – Kalima]

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I had the chance of interviewing professor Masandi Alphonse, Educational Scientist and professor at the University of Kisangani who collaborated with a UNICEF investigation on child labour in the mines and he explained to me this phenomenon of the *élève-parent*:

*“Here you are, you’ve children who play the role of parents. And if you ask them how much they earn each day, or week, they might say 3.000 FC each day of which 1.000 FC go to my mum, 500 FC to my brothers, and the rest I buy food, a t-shirt, a jacket, soap [...]”.*

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This inversion of roles was also identified by Professor Mulondwa in the 2006 “Investigation on child labour in the mines of Kalima an Kailo” made in collaboration with UNICEF/BZE and the University of Kindu. In the report it is possible to read that children help their families through small revenues stemming from mining and as a consequence of this “there is an inversion of roles: child-miners become parents, and parents become children. And this is frightening” (Mulondwa Misenca, 2006:13).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

These conclusions shall not be interpreted as a summary of the previous chapters, but they rather need to be understood as a contribution that links the particularities of this research to more general issues and practices, showing thus the significance of the analysis provided for the discipline of social sciences in general.

### 5.1. *Final Remarks*

The thesis used a case study approach whose value needs to be underlined once again, since it allowed an analytical generalization, rather than a statistical one, providing data for particularization and deep knowledge of the specific cases of Kalima and Kampene. In fact, by linking the children's stories to the theoretical concepts of self-perception and Paulo Freire's theory of oppression, and finally to the theory of failed states, the particular case studies helped a better understanding of the many facets of child labour in general.

The discussion provided in the previous chapters attempted to answer three research questions: which are the working conditions of children employed in the ASM of Kalima and Kampene in Eastern DRC, which is the self-perception of child miners, and finally, what are the consequences of the absence of a functioning State for the conditions of child-miners.

I answered my first research question in chapter 4.5. in which I described the different aspects linked to child labour in the mines, focusing on mine access, work organization, environment, schedule, methods, and consequences of child labour in the mines. This showed that, given the dangerous and hazardous working conditions in the ASM of Kalima and Kampene, children are experiencing a high level of violence and their basic rights are denied.

I then focused on self-perception of children in section 4.6., identifying different reactions of child-miners to oppression namely, antagonism, fatalistic optimism, resilient optimism, and transformative optimism. The conclusion is that the majority of child miners in the case studies of Kalima and Kampene are in a *pre-conscientização* phase, in which they do not perceive their status of oppressed yet, but they rather tend to empathize with their oppressors. This is because the environment created around children lacks stimulus and inputs and hinders children's fulfilment. Through this research question, it was also possible to draw another conclusion, meaning that oppression and exploitation are taking place in different ways, both when exploiters objectively exploit children (e.g. the Lubokela story), and also more in general, when exploiters hinder children's self-affirmation. Both situations constitute violence "even when sweetened by false generosity" (Freire, 1972:31), such as the pursue of a

social aim, as declared by the mining committee of Kampene and reported in section 3.3.1. on paternalism and in section 4.7.1. on dehumanization.

Finally, in section 4.7., I answered my last research questions on the consequences of the absence of a functioning State for the conditions of child-miners. The examples of relationships based on the analytical concepts of power differential, dehumanization, marginalization, etc., coming from the cases of the ASM of Kalima and Kampene, show how a self-perpetuating circle of violence and oppression is established obstructing the road to peace and conflict transformation. This reproduces over and over again a system that is based on inequality and exploitation, with an extensive use of child labour in those sectors qualified as worst forms of child labour, which are forbidden by international declarations. From the perspective of the results provided by my analysis, it was possible to see that the state plays a major role in this situation, since it is undergoing a crisis which is:

*“exemplified by weak or failing public institutions, limited governmental ability to raise and redistribute revenue, inconsistent ability to exert control over all territory, including maintaining order and law, and, extensive violence carried out by government and nongovernmental groups [and this] is calling into question the legitimacy and ability of those governments to govern” (Mazurana, 2004:38, 39).*

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In the light of the above, the conclusion is that there is the need of promoting new forms of good governance able to spread in the whole country, as explained by the social psychologist José Miguel Cruz who demands an “equitable distribution of national wealth and improvement in governance through democratic institutions” (Cruz, 2007:81). I agree with him on that African states must find a way to distribute national wealth much more equally in order to re-establish the rule of law, repossessing of occupied areas, and creating new forms of protection for the population, especially for children.

Immediate action is necessary both for establishing a good governance able to end corruption, impunity, looting, etc., as well as for ensuring a more promising future to forthcoming generations. If authorities are reorganized and the system of child protection, as defined by UNICEF (2008)<sup>67</sup>, for example, is improved, children will have more chances of reaching adulthood, attending schools, accessing basic services, etc. Consequently, with the increase of welfare, a new generation will grow up, augmenting the possibilities of positive change towards the creation of new intellectuals, and a sustainable, long-lasting peace.

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<sup>67</sup> Child protection includes preventing and responding to all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. It starts with prevention and with the strengthen of the national protection systems, followed by the promotion of child protection in conflict and natural disasters (UNICEF, 2008).

## **5.2. Propositions**

*“The children’s confessional tales heightened my desire to note their social condition as part of my enquiry. I saw their condition as adding urgency to the need of action”* (Kayira, 2009:13).

In this section, I would like to develop some propositions on the background of my analysis of the previous chapters.

According to Cruz (2007), basic community services and an efficient local net of authorities that can channel resources towards aiding the neediest communities, can make a difference in preventing and dealing with child labour (ibid.:107). Therefore, if communities, families and children are provided with such services, it is less likely that poverty will spread and worst forms of child labour, such as mining, will continue.

Overcoming completely misery, exploitation and human disrespect is a very slow and complicated task, but, as pointed out by Cruz, it is possible to mitigate their effects by overtaking neglect and marginalization. Mitigation includes a better allocation of resources and the establishment of cooperative behaviours, as well as a procurement of responsibilities by the local authorities that need to be better equipped to communicate and understand the conditions and needs of those communities over which they have direct authority and accountability (Cruz, :135). In fact, in a vast country such as DRC, where state officials are distant and often do not imprint, implement, and diffuse national programmes, local authorities play an important role for promoting rehabilitation and requalification activities.

Moreover, as described in chapter 4.7., the Congolese government assumes a nonchalant behaviour towards child labour and exploitation of young people, abusing power for the benefits of a restricted élite of people. As long as authorities either cannot or do not want to take accountability for these situations, society-based organizations shall try to fill this gap, becoming progressively more important to protect youth, trying to demonstrate that there are other feasible ways of dealing with the problem of youth at risk and child labour. Therefore, where the government fails in its key role of recognizing and using its power to the benefit of its population’s development, such as in the DRC, the communities where children at risk live together with civil society-based organizations shall take over by assuming responsibilities for those members who are particularly vulnerable, such as children.

Hence, it is clear that joint efforts of key people in different types of institutions are needed to deal with a deep rooted problem, such as the worst forms of child labour. Therefore, the design and implementation of specific programs and plans for children and adolescents, should be supported by the civil society, by community-based organizations, NGOs, and

should be backed as much as possible by local authorities, as well as by the international community (Rotberg, 2004:33). However, civil society organizations have to deal with the same government as child labourers and this situation creates a dilemma that has not been object of my research but which represents a crucial topic, and should be investigated in an own research project.

In addition to what has been described above, further concrete steps must be taken to restore a rule of law at the state level. Again Cruz (2007:61) proposes useful actions that should be taken. Among them the establishment of economic and fiscal stability, control of money supply, paying civil servants and state employees (i.e. teachers, police officers), creation new jobs, rehabilitation of infrastructures, and last but not least restoration people's trust in the state through the implementation of functioning legal, educational, health, and fiscal systems based on justice and equity, rather than favouritism and inequality.

Steps like the ones suggested above are needed especially when considering that “a country's youth is its hope and capital for the future; therefore, every effort must be made to prevent that hope from being extinguished and avoid social bankruptcy” (ibid.:135). The situation in DRC is pressing since the emergence of youth/community-related problems due to social and economic exclusion and political indifference are increasing. This requires authorities and organizations to “rethink their roles because of the increasingly unstable and difficult environment in which young people must grow up” (ibid.:127). It is anyway crucial to keep in mind that taking these children away from the dangerous cycle of worst forms of labour and exploitation is not enough.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a safe and healthy life for today's child labourers and to prepare the ground for a more human society, it is necessary to provide at least basic free education, safe havens, minimum health services, and enforcement of an existing legal framework to prevent further violations both in the formal and informal sector. This renewed environment will make children able to react to injustices and aware of their status of oppressed. They will thus have new attitudes towards their situation, going from a general fatalism (in all its forms), towards a transformative optimism that claims children's rights and duties (United Nations CRC, 2001:art.67). Moreover, the provision of attractive alternatives and options tailored on young people's needs might be helpful for encouraging them in defining concrete aims, making them feeling creative and valuable. The future of these children goes beyond “dreaming what one wants to be” and it refers to caring for the future generation itself. Future is creating a responsible, sustainable, and respectful society, it is about counting the long-term benefits of a mental improvement, it is about taking into account

the effects of adults' activities on children, and some adults often forget to think about this (Torimiro, 2009:77). Sparks of change can be noticed at the local level as the Minister of Mines of the Province of Maniema explained during an interview:

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*“We are in the on-going process, it’s a process as I told you, we cannot change things immediately today, neither for child-diggers, nor for adults diggers because their working conditions are very bad. So, we still need to improve their level of lives, especially through educators”.*

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However, I totally embrace the idea of mental revolution that Prof. N’Sanda proposed and that I have reported in section 4.6.2. It refers to a deep, critical, and introspective change that stems from the creative exchange among youths. This inward-looking, meditative path can affect the culture at the basis of the society bringing about a subsequent cultural revolution which will be more conscientious and attentive.

Finally, what is needed together with a mental revolution is a new political class neither irresponsible, nor corrupted, as explained by the coordinator of a local NGO, who is also a prominent African writer:

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*“[We need a] responsible leadership made of people who stand up and say “I refuse this and I will denounce it at the international level no matter what the consequences are”. We need someone who can take this risk accepting the consequences otherwise it is not possible to lead the country”.*

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Once authorities become responsible and engage themselves in re-building the country, paying particular attention to children’s aspirations, needs and wishes, a lawful system can be implemented.

### ***5.3. Implications for the future***

Future implications regard both research and practical procedures within various institutions.

Concerning further research, it would be useful to deepen the themes analysed in this paper through comparative studies able to deal with the situation of Congolese child-miners and child-miners in other fields and/or countries where worst forms of child labour are common. This would surely produce highly interesting results and would be of great use in terms of designing practical solutions.

Research should focus primarily in those countries highly affected by child labour, in order to collect enough information useful to calibrate a subsequent intervention. Nonetheless, since forms of child labour are also present in developed countries, research should also be carried out analysing forms of child labour in such environments, where children are often



forgotten, right because they are living in such “developed” contexts. In Italy, for example, one main field in which children are employed is commercial agriculture (especially in southern Italy), or bars and restaurants, mainly during summer season. This has also been highlighted in the 2002 report of ISTAT “Bambini, Lavori e Lavoretti”<sup>68</sup> (Biggeri, 2002).

From this stems the idea that practical procedures should follow a thorough analysis of the background in order to avoid mistakes. Action can include a various set of activities organized from small to big scale contexts. Starting with minor pilot projects focusing in one area could be useful for seeing if improvements can take place at micro-level and if they are reproducible at bigger scale.

As underlined also at the beginning of this thesis, the aim of this paper was not providing the solution to the problems studied, but rather giving a contribution for the improvement of research and action for children and human rights, and protection of civil society starting from a bottom-up approach. In this manner, I tried to show that a big quantity of information regarding child labour resides in children themselves who turn out to be the best informants.

Finally, we should keep in mind that the purpose of both research, as well as of action in this field, should not have limits or borders, but should be extensive, respectful, and most of all, immediate.

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<sup>68</sup> “Children, jobs and seasonal work”.

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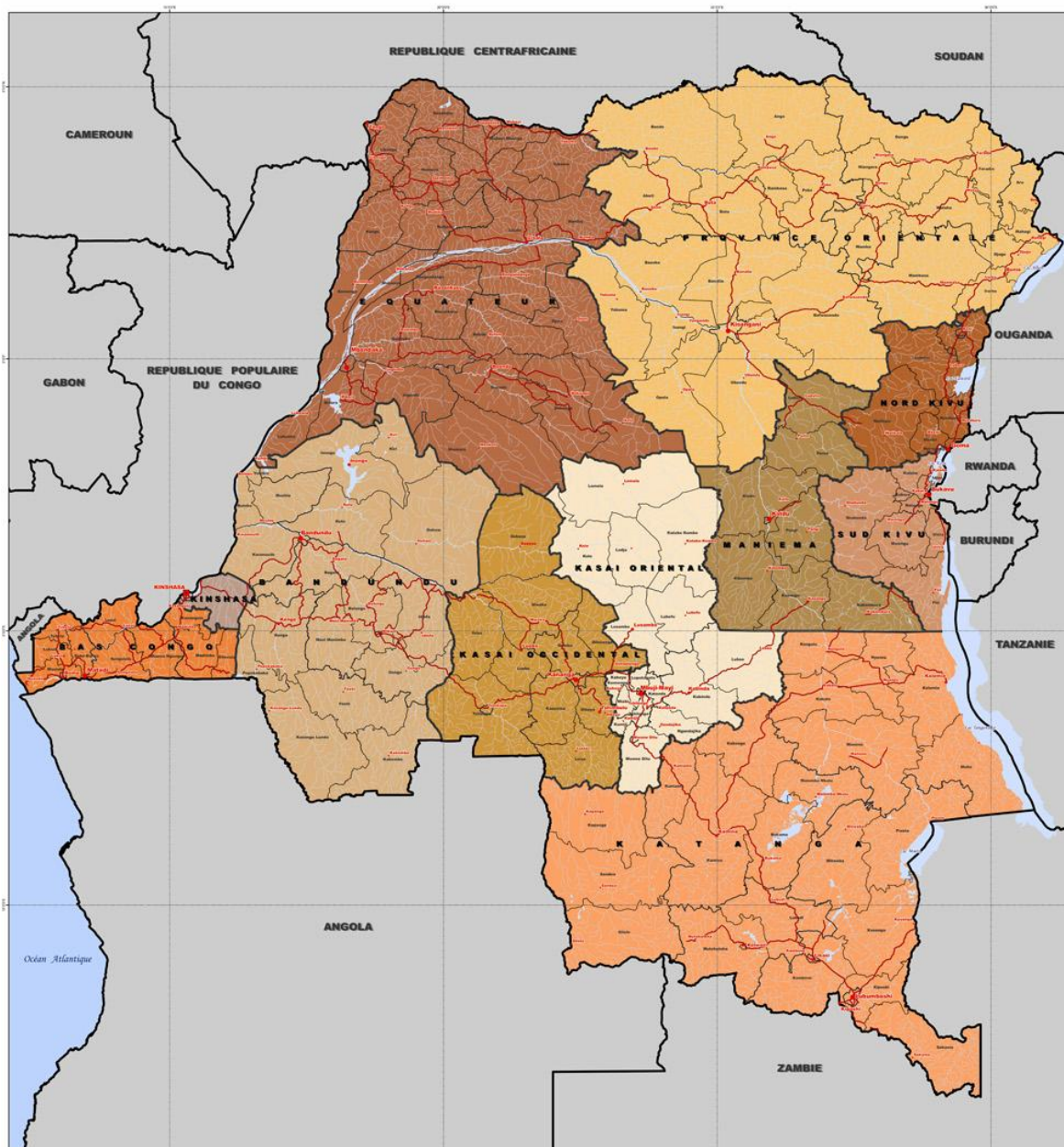
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### **Conventions and Recommendations**

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<p><b>LEGENDE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Capitale Nationale</li> <li>● Chef Lieu de Province</li> <li>● Chef Lieu de District</li> <li>● Chef Lieu de Territoire</li> <li>— Route Principale</li> <li>— Cours d'eau</li> <li>■ Lac</li> <li>— Limite d'Etat</li> <li>— Limite Province</li> <li>— Limite District</li> <li>— Limite Territoire</li> </ul>	<p>OCHA EST SOUTENU PAR :</p> <p>Belgique, ECHO, Espagne, Irlande, Luxembourg, Norvège, Pays-Bas, Royaume-Uni, Suède, Etats-Unis</p> <p>Source de Données Géographiques : Référentiel Géographique Commun (<a href="http://www.rgc.cd">www.rgc.cd</a>)</p> <p>Production Date : 25/06/2009 Produced by : OCHA DRC - HIS Datum : WGS84</p>	<p>1 : 3 172 000</p> <p>Les Nations Unies ne sauraient être tenues responsables de la qualité des limites, des noms et des désignations utilisés sur cette carte</p>
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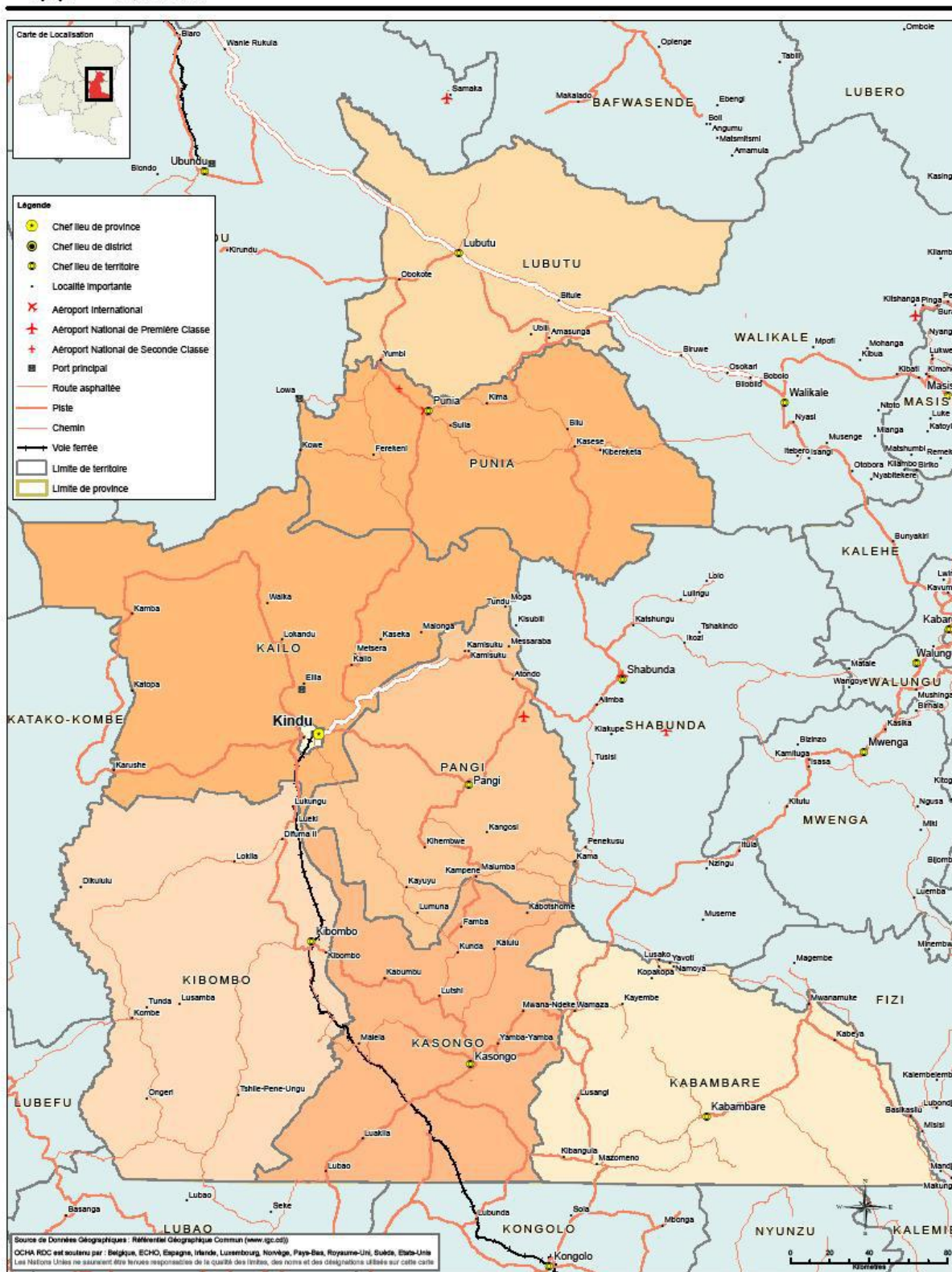
(Relief Web, 2009a)



UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - République Démocratique du Congo

R D Congo - Province du Maniema - Carte administrative

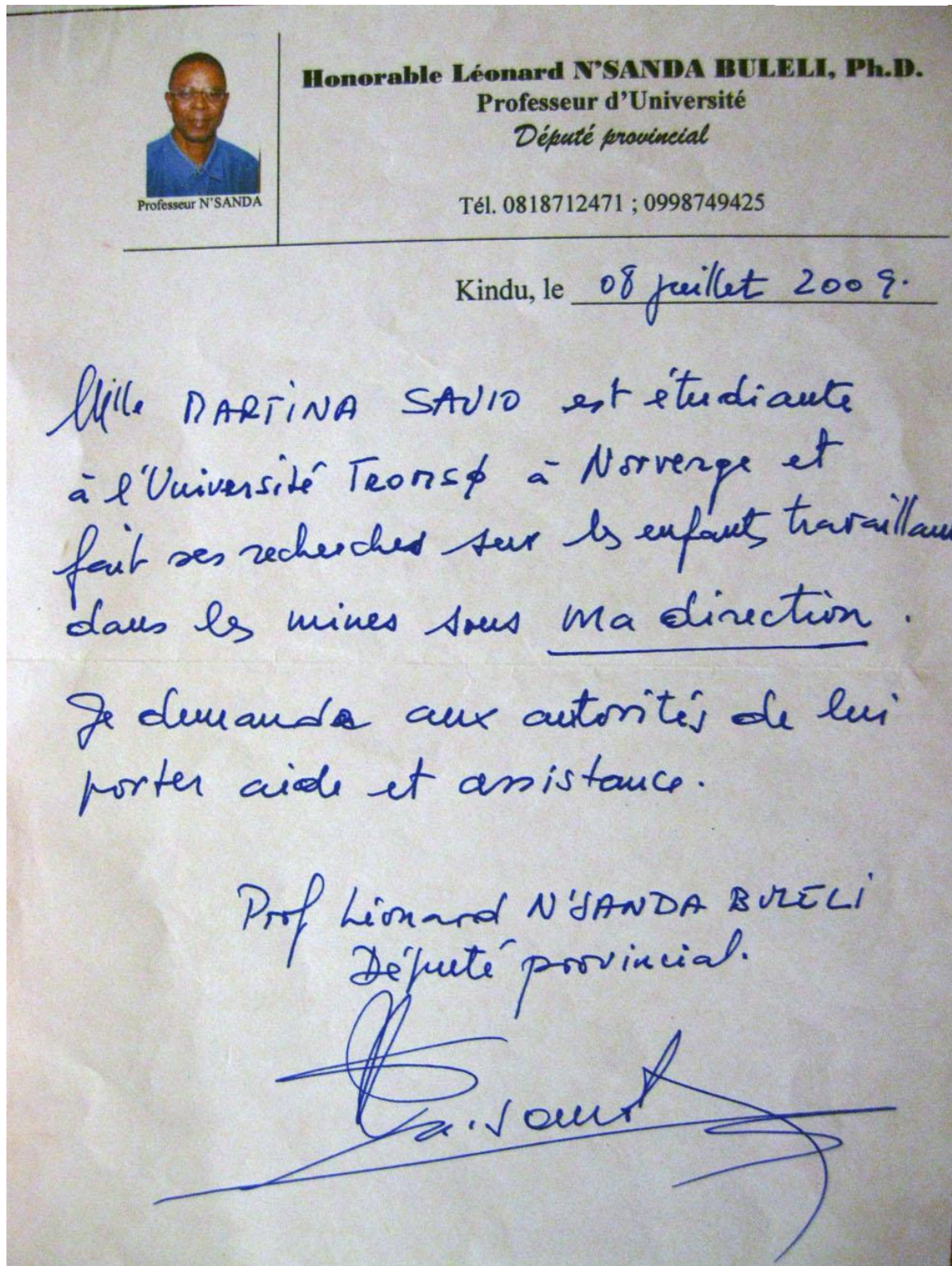
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(Relief Web, 2009b)





The letter says:

Miss MARTINA SAVIO is a student at the University of Tromsø in Norway and she is doing her research on children working in the mines under my supervision. I ask to authorities to help and assist her.

Prof. Léonard N'Sanda Buleli  
Provincial Deputy

**INTERVIEW GUIDE  
For child-miners**

**I. WARMING-UP**

Introduction (Presentation of myself and of the research structure and aims).  
Introduction of children (age, educational level).

**II. CONDITIONS OF LIVING & FAMILY**

Place and location of housing.  
Who do they live with?  
If living with the family, provide a description of the family unit (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, etc...)  
If not living with their families, who is taking care of them?  
Follow-up question: do they have contact with their families.  
Educational Level of parents or tutors.

**IV. WORKING CONDITIONS**

Beginning of the job (how, when, who through, why).  
Working day/s and schedule.  
Description of a typical working day:  
Working methods.  
How do they extract the mineral.  
Individual/group tasks.  
Level of satisfaction with the job:  
Do you like to work here?  
If alternatives were available, would you change your current work position?  
Relationship/Attitudes towards the children/adolescents in the mines.  
Relationship/Attitudes towards their employers (if any).

**V. MINING ACTIVITY**

<p>Knowledge of the ore extracted: Knowledge of what they are extracting. Knowledge of what the mineral is used for. Knowledge of where it is sent to. Who sells and who buys? Who do they sell to? How much?</p>	}	Production chain
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**VI. SELF-PERCEPTIONS**

Future aspirations.  
Consciousness of their situation.  
Who would they address their claims to.