



## Ensuring a future for children

### Protecting our children against dangerous work

It is extremely dangerous for children to work in mining sites and quarries as it is a risk their health, their safety and their future. The hazards of the work in mines are such that the United Nations considers mining one of the worst forms of child labor (ILO Convention 182).

**It is illegal in the DRC for persons under 18 to work in mines and quarries.**

It is the entire community's responsibility to ensure that children attend school and that they do not end up working in mines.

It is everyone's responsibility to provide them with a better future and better life.

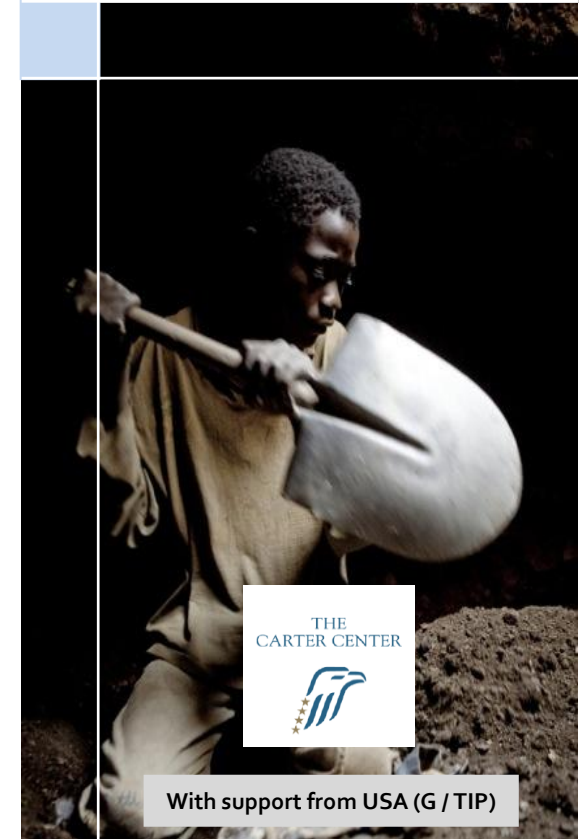
## What are the risks to children?

Children working in mines and quarries are often injured in accidents or disabled by the nature of this dangerous work. There are significant risks to human health, including exposure to toxic contaminants such as mercury and other metals, which can cause long-term health problems. Some of these children die before reaching adulthood.

Children working in mines are often exposed to physical and sexual violence. They are sometimes used by adults for the sale of drugs or alcohol, forced into prostitution, or subjected to other forms of sexual exploitation.

Other children are left with physical, mental and emotional scars that prevent them from functioning normally as adults. Many of them are deprived of a better future, because they could not go to school.

It is our responsibility to protect our children



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## What kinds of work are children doing?

Children participate in many activities, including excavation work, and the collection, screening, washing and sorting of minerals. They are subjected to hazardous situations and poor working conditions. Their work may take them in to mining sites more than 20 meters deep for many hours at a time to extract minerals and carry them back to the surface on their shoulders. In the mines of Katanga, children are sometimes directly exposed to materials with high radiation and given no protection while earning very low wages.



**“The dangers are so obvious and extreme that there are no conditions – poverty included – under which child work in mining can be tolerated.”**

- ILO (2006). *Minors out of mining! Partnership for global action against child labour in small-scale mining.*

## Let's keep our children in school!

Children have the legal right to an education. Parents and the government have an obligation to ensure that conditions are in place to allow children to attend school. When children work, especially in mines and quarries, this often prevents them from going to school and from earning a diploma.

Education offers children the opportunity and confidence to build a future for themselves, their families and their communities. Children who attend school have more opportunities when they grow up than children who did not receive an education. They are much more likely to escape poverty and find better paying jobs.

## Who is responsible for protecting children?

From parents to government agents to members of the community, everyone shares this responsibility: Parents must give priority to education and seek other opportunities for income; communities and civil society organizations must support families experiencing particular economic difficulties; private companies must be careful not to accept child labor in mines; and the government should enforce existing laws and strengthen economic assistance programs and social services that help families send their children to school to keep from making them have to work.