

5. WHO DOES NATURE BELONG TO?

(PHOTOGRAPHS 14 - 17)

Who is that armed man? Why do you think he is there? What could his job be? He is a Congolese police officer and his job is to guard the loading of the bags of coltan extracted at the mine. Why do you think this police officer is needed?

Who gets the materials from the mines? Who gets and controls the profits that come from them? Who suffers the consequences of the mining and processing of these materials? What do the workers get for all their work? And, speaking of using natural resources, this is a question we should all ask ourselves: who does nature belong to?

The conflict in Congo has produced the most deaths of any conflict since the Second World War. More than five million people have been killed since 1998, a million people were displaced in 2013 and more than a hundred thousand women are raped every year. The war was not caused by coltan, but global capitalism has taken advantage of the situation and the coltan trade, far from bringing prosperity to the people, has often been used to finance the armed groups that control the mines, feeding the cycle of violence.

Sexual violence has been used as a weapon, because raping the women in a community weak-



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ens the community, breaking down the social cohesion that women foster. Child exploitation is also common: many children are forced to work in the mines and many girls are forced into prostitution. We must also bear in mind that many of the people who work in the mines are people displaced by the conflict, as the mines are the only financial resource available to them.



After considering all this, take another look at photo number 17. Try to imagine a day in the life of this person. What time do you think they get up? Where do you think they sleep? How old is the person? Have they got a family?

ALBOAN supports responsible management or governance of natural resources: the very communities or people who live in those places are the ones who should decide which model of development they want, in accordance with the community strategies of each place. In the DRC, for example, the organisations and communities that work to achieve development and well-being out of mining should join forces.

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