13 Good governance for mining and the promotion of peace in Africa

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The increasing frequency and intensity of conflicts in Africa in the last two decades are largely attributed to poor governance amid the rising discovery and exploitation of mining resources (Afful-Koomson 2015, 1). Such conflicts are driven by issues such as access to minerals, revenue distribution, environmental impacts, and corruption, among others. According to the World Bank (2021), extractive industries play a dominant role in the social, political, and economic life of 81 countries with a total population of 3.5 billion people. If the industries are well managed, the populations in these countries should all live above the poverty line, but that is not the case. To a great extent, revenues generated from mining have not been used to support sustainable national development or meet the needs of populations in an inclusive way, especially in the Global South. Consequently, many resource-rich countries in Africa have high poverty levels and unemployment rates, and generally poor economic conditions despite large revenues from the exploitation of minerals.

This mismanagement has impacted conflict in Africa. As Philippe Le Billon (2001, 561) observes, extractive resources “shape strategies of power based on the commercialisation of armed conflict and the territorialisation of sovereignty around valuable resource areas and trading networks.” The poor and marginalized, especially women and children, are often the most affected. In 2019, Pope Francis raised concern over systematic injustices that people continue to suffer due to mismanagement in the mining industry, such as land loss, high poverty levels in mining communities, threats and violence, high rates of corruption, and forced prostitution and rape (Gomes 2019). The pope further asserted that, “We need to ensure that mining activities lead to the integral human development of each and every person and of the entire community.”

Given these problems, there is an urgent need to promote good governance of mining on the African continent. Governance refers to political and institutional processes that “shape how scientific and technological processes are directed, how environmental and health issues are defined and addressed, and how social consequences are distributed” (Leach et al. 2007). It is crucial to include citizens in the processes of governance in the

mining industry because they tend to be the ones most affected, negatively or positively, as well as directly and indirectly.

This chapter explores the issue of good governance in mining and the promotion of peace, with examples largely from the Great Lakes and Eastern Africa region, but also other parts of the continent. It examines how the governance of mining can be improved through a Catholic peacebuilding approach, founded on Catholic social teaching. The aim is to ensure that natural resources are protected as necessary for the common good; exploited within a framework of care for the environment, protection of human dignity, and sensitivity to the impact on conflict dynamics; and used for revenues that are distributed equitably to the majority of the population.

Contextualizing mining industry governance in Africa

Africa has a wide range of mineral deposits used in producing jewelry, automobiles, electronics, renewable batteries, and other goods. As a result, mining generates significant income, but Africa's enormous wealth of natural resources has yet to translate into significant improvement in people's living standards. The mining sector is marred by high levels of corruption and criminality, perpetrated by armed groups who use proceeds from the sale of minerals like gold, tantalum, and tin to finance violent activities (Lebert 2016). Resource-based conflicts have occurred in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, the Central African Republic, Liberia, South Sudan, and elsewhere. Also, companies and individuals that engage in mining activities frequently do not take the necessary steps to ensure transparency in the supply chain. Furthermore, many people across the region engage in artisanal mining to earn a living despite the dangers of exposure to human rights abuses, corruption, or violence (White and Beck 2017). Artisanal and other types of mining also tend to destroy the environment and expose communities to further ecological vulnerabilities, such as polluted water sources, open pits that could be harmful to the community, and soil erosion.

The social-economic contradictions in many parts of Africa translate into a paradox of suffering in the midst of plenty. Rich mineral resources largely benefit foreign multinational companies (MNCs), elites within national governments, and insurgent groups, while leaving the rest of the population poor and desperate. This tends to contradict the economic theory that holds that foreign direct investments "create growth multiplier effects through vertical and horizontal spillover effects: including the transfer of technology and know-how to domestic firms, the formation of human capital, etc" (Colen, Maertens, and Swinnen 2013, 23). Poor governance, while not the only culprit, is a central reason why these economic benefits do not come to fruition. It allows the MNCs that play a major role in mineral supply chains to engage in exploitative activities that promote crime, corruption, and inequitable sharing of mineral wealth, which fuels violent conflicts.

Kenya has experienced numerous resource-induced conflicts, largely due to competition for land and water for both human livelihood and livestock grazing, but also for control over mines. For example, the residents of Kwale County in the coastal region of Kenya have been opposed to titanium mining while citing concerns over displacement of the local populations, and pollution of water resources that the government and the Canadian mining company failed to address (Gryl 2019). In addition, some of the communities that were forced to cede land for mining have not been compensated. The government's discriminatory approach—compensating some but not all communities—has led to regional conflict. There have also been cases where competition for land used for small-scale mining of sand and special stones has led to community conflicts.

The DRC has immense natural resource wealth, but with poor governance structures for overseeing them, the country has become “a textbook forum for natural resource-induced conflicts at both local and national levels” (Burnley 2011, 7). The country is among those that have experienced the bloodiest conflicts since the Second World War, conflicts that often have been over control of mineral resources, as Rigobert Minani describes in this book (see also Snow 2013). As elsewhere in Africa, the DRC's enormous wealth of natural resources has yet to translate into significant improvement in people's living standards. For instance, the poverty level is one of the highest on the continent. With its 2019 Human Development Index rating of 0.48, which is below the average of 0.513 for countries within the low development group, the DRC was ranked 175 out of 189 countries (United Nations Development Program 2020, 2). While the DRC has fifty percent of the forests and water resources in Africa, the country's environment is negatively affected by “deforestation, species depletion, heavy metal pollution and land degradation from mining, as well as an acute drinking water crisis which has left an estimated 51 million Congolese without access to potable water” (United Nations Environment Programme 2017, n.p.). Ninety percent of mining is artisanal (Samndong and Nhantumbo 2015, 6). Landscapes in the mining regions have generally been destroyed, while many people in these regions live in deplorable conditions due to extreme poverty and poor delivery of crucial government services (EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention 2015). As Minani describes, a major push from Catholic groups and others led to a revision of the country's mining contracts, but a lack of transparency and oversight when the contracts were finally renegotiated left the country in the dark about how governance would actually be improved to address these challenges.

Other countries have experienced similar problems tied to mining and other extractives. Sierra Leone is a well-known example, where diamond mining was used to fund militia groups. These groups fought over control of this resource, while using revenues to purchase arms. South Sudan has large oil deposits but is one of the world's poorest countries. The country has been mired in conflict since 2013, leading to civilian displacement and

death. The conflict has disrupted oil production, the main source of government revenue. There has been destruction of forests for firewood and charcoal, and artisanal miners have degraded the environment searching for diamonds and gold. The Malawi Ministry of Energy, Natural Resources and Environment (2010, iii) has cited challenges in the country's extractive industry similar to those in DRC: "deforestation; decreasing soil fertility and increasing erosion; water depletion; loss of biodiversity; and increasing pollution." Likewise, Tanzania has been battling an increasing problem of coastal erosion attributed to sand mining (Gavriletea 2017).

These cases demonstrate how resource-based conflicts, to a great extent, are attributable to poor management in the mining industry. Luca Ventura (2020, n.p.) argues that all "extremely fragile and underdeveloped economies have either recently been through a civil war or are suffering from ongoing sectarian or ethnic conflicts." Mineral-rich countries in Africa fit this pattern. Hence, good and efficient extractive management policies and structures are critical for sustainable economic development that can overcome those adverse conditions and lead to peace and stability. As noted above, in Africa, conflicts have largely been facilitated by unfair distribution of natural resources and marginalization of large parts of the population in the course of exploitation of these resources. According to Clementine Burnley (2011), countries that have quality institutions dedicated to the management of natural resources have a low likelihood of plunging into violent conflicts. Institutional structures and norms like constitutional order, equal justice under law, democratic principles, independent judicial and legislative systems, and executive accountability—when enshrined in law and practice—diminish chances of social conflicts and injustices related to mining. For example, in South Sudan large quantities of gold are smuggled out of the country on a regular basis, largely to benefit the political elite, business people, and foreign investors (Mach 2017). The proceeds from the smuggled minerals tend to encourage the formation of militant groups that can destabilize a nation. This explains why the mineral-rich area of eastern DRC has the largest number of militia groups and the worst forms of human rights abuses in the region. Poor governance allows patterns like this to exist, and improved governance is the key to curtailing them.

Distinctive aspects of a Catholic peacebuilding approach

A Catholic peacebuilding approach comprises a "broad spectrum of activities, a wide variety of actors, and diverse elements of Catholic beliefs and teachings that must come together for the Catholic community to fulfill its mission as a Peacebuilding Church" (Powers 2017, 1). A Catholic peacebuilding approach is anchored in the Catholic social teaching principles of common good and human dignity. These two principles ground the Catholic commitment to safeguard the environment, secure livelihoods for

current and future generations, and responsibly manage the benefits accrued from the earth's resources so that the entire population of a country is not only a stakeholder, but also a beneficiary. Such an approach ensures peace and stability in the country.

Incarnations of Catholic peacebuilding vary across Africa. For instance, in 2018 in the DRC, the church oversaw mediation processes and the implementation of political pacts, and played a vital role in voter education and advocating for free and fair elections. In South Sudan, the South Sudan Council of Churches and other church actors have been instrumental in peacebuilding efforts: pressing for peace negotiations, sponsoring civil society peace processes, and focusing on advocacy and dialogue through impartial forums that have fostered reconciliation. This culminated in Pope Francis' invitation to the key protagonists in the conflict to come to the Vatican for a reconciliation retreat in April 2019. The pope kissed the feet of the political leaders and begged them to end the conflict and embrace peace. Subsequently, in addition to other diverse and complementary efforts for peace, the Sant'Egidio Community, a lay Catholic group based in Rome, has facilitated peace negotiations involving President Salva Kiir, his opponent and former deputy Riek Machar, and other actors. These negotiations have led to agreements that have allowed for the formation of a government of national unity, bringing an end to intermittent conflicts that have plagued the youngest nation in the world since 2013. The pope's intervention showed the church's commitment to peace and conflict resolution. Additionally, Pope Francis's visit to the Central African Republic in 2017, at the peak of civil violence, to appeal for peaceful resolution to the conflict was a heroic gesture that demonstrated the church's solidarity with the suffering population. In Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa, among many other countries, the church has strongly spoken against exploitation of the poor, corruption, poor governance, and extreme forms of violence by militia and terrorist groups. The church, in its prophetic mission to defend human dignity and safeguard the common good, has largely been influenced by the Catholic peacebuilding approach.

A Catholic peacebuilding approach is distinctive in two main ways that relate directly to issues of mining and governance. First is the emphasis that the church puts on "the biblical conception of peace, the centrality of peace in the Church's sacraments and mission, and a distinctively Christian theological and ethical approach to war and peace" (Powers 2017, 4). The theological approach to peace begins in Scripture, and Cardinal Peter Turkson provides a reflection in this book on how the Bible colors a Catholic understanding of mining. He describes how metals and minerals mined from the earth are, like all creation, intended by God to contribute to the building up of the heavenly kingdom. The goods of the earth are meant to be for more than just profit or utility, but a peaceful, rightly ordered human society builds upon economic development. Hence, good governance of mining and promotion of peace, rooted in equitable sharing of

common resources and a deliberate option for the poor, are grounded in a normative theological foundation. Mining that creates marginalization, environmental destruction, and threats to livelihoods, and that in turn feed violent conflict, ought to be challenged and critiqued in light of that normative ethic. For Catholic actors and organizations working in the mining sector, this theological foundation should help inform and motivate them. And for Catholic ecclesial leaders it should animate their pastoral leadership and drive them to engage the faithful, as well as their broader national and regional communities, with an understanding that mining issues are crucial to the just peace that marks the kingdom of God.

A second distinctive aspect of a Catholic peacebuilding approach is the church's use of the tradition of natural law, which is based on the presumption that "the demands of justice and peace are knowable and binding on all persons, regardless of their faith commitments or lack thereof" (Powers 2017, 4). This approach embraces all humanity, regardless of faith or socio-cultural affiliation. At the center of the natural law interpretation is the safeguarding of human dignity and the common good. Hence, the inhuman circumstances under which some mining activities operate are against the natural law of respect of human dignity. Peacebuilding in the mining industry through advocacy for fair distribution of the benefits of mining, sustainable environmental practices, safe working conditions, and concern for future generations is an outgrowth of natural law. Such an approach can help Catholic peacebuilders reach outside their own tradition and engage other faith traditions, secular groups, and governments and corporations on common issues of concern related to ethics and good governance in the mining industry. Catholic peacebuilding "calls on Christians to cooperate with all people in securing a peace based on justice and love" (Curran 1984, 61).

Catholic social teaching and governance of extractive industries

Catholic social teaching (CST) can provide guidance for governance of mining industries in Africa. When applied to mining, these principles include the following assumptions: natural resources are common goods; political authorities have a right and duty to manage these resources in transparent and equitable ways that respect human rights and do, in fact, contribute to the common good; the environment must be protected in the course of exploitation of natural resources; natural resources should be managed in ways that mitigate conflict and promote peace; and the principles of justice and solidarity require that the imbalance of power between host African countries and MNCs should be rectified.

CST emphasizes management of natural resources as common goods that ought to be enjoyed by all. This emphasis has two main dimensions: preservation of common resources for current and future generations, as well

as fair distribution of benefits. The two imperatives are co-existent and complementary. On preservation of common resources, Pope Francis (2015, §93) states that “the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone.” Inclusion of future generations in the planning and exploitation of natural resources is a crucial part of this obligation to preserve common resources. Since natural resources are a common inheritance, the costs and benefits of their extraction ought to be shared fairly among the population. Their exploitation should not be for the financial gain of the few at the expense of the many. Communities living around mines ought to be protected from possible negative effects on their well-being.

Transparency in the management of the financial wealth and profits accruing from mining should be maintained as a vital principle in extractive governance. The common good cannot be protected or strengthened if corruption cannot be identified and if bad financial deals prevent the people from receiving just benefits from the country’s mineral resources. Transparency also makes space for communities near mining sites to be more engaged, making for more possibility of consensus building among all stakeholders. Such consensus is important for promotion of human dignity, peace, and stability. Pope Francis (2015, §183) affirms that “the local population should have a special place at the table; they are concerned about their own future and that of their children, and can consider goals transcending immediate economic interest.”

While exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of all citizens in a country is acceptable, care should be taken to ensure that the environment is preserved and quality of human life safeguarded. Good mining management practices require minimizing negative effects on the environment, whether on or off-site, and undertaking mitigation and rehabilitation procedures for ecological damage. Of major concern in many African countries is the lack of institutionalized policies that are operationalizable within the framework of mining, especially for ensuring benefit to the majority of the population and protecting the environment.

In most mining settings, as pressure mounts on the environment and the chances of conflicts increase, the poor are especially vulnerable. In this book, Holden and Montevecchio examine the issue of climate justice—that is, the way demand for minerals in the Global North causes environmental harm that disproportionately affects poor and marginalized peoples in the Global South. It also explains how mining is one of the leading correlates with instances of violent conflict related to such increased environmental vulnerability. This reality is what led Pope Francis (2015, §48) to observe that “both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.” Bad management of the environmental consequences of mining increases levels of poverty, worsening living standards, and rendering communities vulnerable to conflicts.

If mining is properly regulated and managed, it can contribute to alleviating poverty and underdevelopment while protecting the environment. But, as Pope Benedict XVI (2011, §79) noted, unjust and exploitative economic activities by the elites should not be disguised as actions that seek to eradicate poverty. Pope Francis (2015, §51) diagnosed how multinational companies exploit the economic disadvantage of countries in the Global South with damaging practices that they would not carry out in their home countries. Such patterns both feed off and reinforce global power inequalities. They inhibit sustainable development, damage the environment, and threaten peace and stability. According to Francis, the spirit of solidarity, which serves as a critique of this kind of exploitation, must be institutionalized in strong and effective governance structures, laws, and policies (§142).

Harnessing the peacebuilding capacity of the Catholic Church in mining industries

The church can increase its potential for peacebuilding as a strategy for addressing issues around governance of mining if it strengthens three ecclesiastical characteristics: being technically informed; being communally present; and being engaged and committed to social change. This will require ecclesiastical and pastoral strategies that strengthen the church's capacity to effect social-political change for the benefit of the people in an area that requires significant specialized knowledge, prolonged dedication, and a varied coalition.

A “technically-informed church” refers to the need for educating church leaders and laity about the technical aspects of mining industries. The complexities of exploration, environmental assessments, means of exploitation, community development agreements, systems for distribution of benefits from extractives, environmental impact mitigation, and exit strategies are a clear indication that any involvement in this industry presupposes a high level of knowledge on key technical issues. Raymond Offenheiser, in his chapter, argues that in order to be taken seriously by industry leaders and be effective change agents, Catholic peacebuilders need to ally with people that have technical expertise and work to expand their own technical knowledge in these areas. Thus the church and lay organizations need funding, dedicated staff, and leaders who are committed to working on the issue for a long period of time. Technical expertise will also require liaising with local and international experts in the field of mining within Catholic and non-Catholic networks, education institutions, and civil society networks. Organizations like The People's Dialogue¹ and the Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy,² Haki Madini (‘justice for minerals’ in Kiswahili) in Tanzania,³ Women in Mining National Network Structure (RENAFEM in French) in the DRC, Extractive Sector Forum (ESF) in Kenya, and others are crucial

players in mining industry advocacy and have developed robust networks of technical knowledge.

Technical knowledge is also important in contract negotiations between MNCs and host African countries. The process of drafting and signing these contracts is often questionable. Most African governments do not have the technical know-how on fair negotiation, monitoring of the exploration and exploitation of resources, and the technology and practices required to ensure that the populations remain safe from any possible negative effects in the short, medium, and long term. Pope Francis (2015, §175) emphasizes that “The twenty-first century, while maintaining systems of governance inherited from the past, is witnessing a weakening of the power of nation-states, chiefly because the economic and financial sectors, being transnational, tends to prevail over the political.” He adds that we must create international mechanisms for management of natural resources that cushion poorer countries from negative impacts of extractive industries while promoting transparency and accountability. But such improvements require increased knowledge and capacity, and the church needs to lead the way by supporting the education of its communities and using that knowledge for effective policy advocacy for governance that can better withstand the huge power imbalances that exist between MNCs and host countries. The Catholic organizations that carried out the study of DRC mining contracts described by Minani serve as a good model for how other Catholic actors can take on this very technical, but very important, aspect of mining governance.

The second ecclesiological characteristic is that the church ought to be present to its people. In most cases, mining activities are carried out in isolated and marginalized locations, or in situations of protracted conflict. This can exhaust the church leaders to the extent of abandoning the people. Maintaining stamina to stay in solidarity with the people and walk the journey of justice with them is fundamental. This challenge makes the church’s ability to connect advocacy around mining to core elements of its spiritual and pastoral practice vitally important. In this book, the chapter by Polanía-Reyes and Henao on Colombia offers a strong positive example. The Colombian Church has identified mining and ecology as key dimensions of the implementation of its national peace process, and is encouraging a stronger presence of ecological theology in its pastoral mission so as to make ecclesial leaders and systems more firmly invested in how mining and ecological damage present challenges to peace and development.

The third characteristic is direct engagement on social justice issues. This presupposes the two previous characteristics: that there is a high level of knowledge on technical issues in the mining sector, and that the church is effectively present in mining communities so that it understands their challenges and needs. This third characteristic is focused on channeling the other two into specific actions for improving governance of natural

resources. It is important that church actors use technical knowledge and understanding gleaned from accompanying local communities to conduct contextual analyses that identify major issues of concern and strategize on how to address them. Not every instance of mining presents the same challenges. For example, different companies conduct their business in different ways, different minerals demand different techniques and have different impacts, different countries have different cultures and histories that prioritize different values, and different countries and regions have to deal with their own unique conflict factors. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions, and so the church needs enough savvy and expertise to develop specific policy priorities and advocacy agendas. Therefore, church groups need to establish advocacy networks with diverse organizations—NGOs, civil society groups, different faiths, and inter-government institutions. These networks can bring positive change by promoting the common good, protecting human dignity and safeguarding human livelihoods and the environment. These social justice activities bring out the servant leadership aspects of the church.

While justice priorities will vary as described, the management of natural resources in situations of conflict is an important cross-cutting factor given the fact that many countries in Africa have experienced resource-based conflicts. Hence, there should be clear links between conflict resolution strategies and advocacy on justice and environmental issues related to the exploitation of natural resources. Pope Francis (2015, §92) reiterates that “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism.” Different mechanisms of managing and preventing both existing and potential conflicts in extractive industries are crucial for sustainability of the sector. These include integration of conflict resolution measures into development agreements between communities, MNCs, and governments, as well as into broader governance structures of mining. Equally important is that environmental impact assessments ought to anticipate the potential impact of natural resource exploitation on conflicts. Conflict prevention also requires fair distribution of the benefits of mining, especially to the communities most affected.

Conclusion

Africa is home to close to thirty percent of the world’s minerals and has great potential to achieve peace and prosperity. However, poor governance of extractive resources has rendered the continent vulnerable to external exploitation by MNCs, as well as the corruption and greed of political and social elites who have continued to deny the majority of the population the benefits of mining. In addition, mining has contributed to environmental degradation and inter-communal conflicts. The church has a major role in

advocating for institutional reforms within government and the mining industry in order to achieve good governance and accountability, and it is well-equipped to do so. It must continue to insist that natural resources are a heritage that ought to be safeguarded as common goods to be enjoyed by all, while taking into account the needs of future generations and peace in affected communities and nations.

Notes

- 1 See <https://www.peoplesdialogue.org/>.
- 2 See <https://www.thematicsocialforum.org/>.
- 3 See <http://hakimadini.org/>.

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