

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



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"Many more, every day, carry the weight of an economic system that exploits human beings, imposing on them an unbearable 'yoke', which the few privileged do not want to bear."

Pope Francis, Angelus July 6, 2014

In February, we commemorate the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking and the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita. As a child, Josephine was kidnapped from her village in Western Sudan and bought and sold over a dozen times during a 12-year period. She was forced to work for multiple families and suffered extensive physical and mental abuse. Eventually she was sold to an Italian master who placed her in a Catholic convent while they were traveling. While living with the Sisters in Venice, Josephine learned about God, received the sacraments and was ultimately declared free. She took her final vows with the Canossian Daughters of Charity on December, 8, 1896. (Catholic Online)

More than 150 years later, the links between human trafficking, economics and environmental degradation remain strong. These connections are most evident in the forced and unregulated labor throughout the mining industry playing out in several mineral rich countries around the globe, including Peru and the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the Sisters of Bon Secours minister.

JPIC Ministry: Building on a Strong Foundation

In the January 2024 newsletter, Sr. Mary Beth Hamm, SSJ, highlighted the awesome accomplishments of the JPIC ministry over the years. Under her leadership the Sisters, together with area JPIC teams, the JPIC committee and the greater Bon Secours community, built a strong collaborative platform around social and environmental justice issues. I am very grateful for this solid foundation as I step into my new role. Thank you for welcoming me into the Bon Secours family. I look forward to advocating with you for a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable world.

– Simone Blanchard, Director JPIC



February
JPIC Days of Remembrance

February 4
International Day of Human Fraternity

February 8
Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita

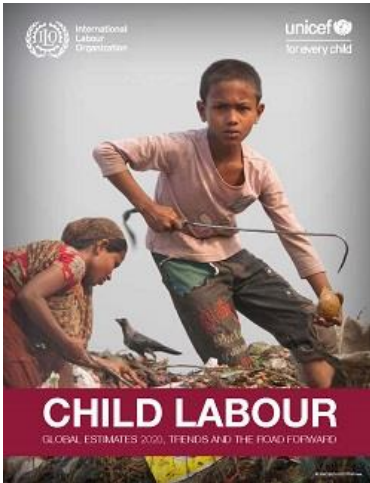


International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking

February 11
World Day of the Sick

February 14
Ash Wednesday

February 20
World Day of Social Justice



Read the full report ilo.org

The Hidden Costs of the Mining Industry: Children's Lives

More than one million children are engaged in child labor in mines and quarries. This is a serious violation of children's rights that puts children's health and safety at risk and deprives them of an education. It limits productivity of workforces for entire generations. It is also a business challenge, because much of the minerals mined by children end up in global supply chains, including those of automobiles, banking, construction, cosmetics, electronics, and jewelry. In the face of this, there are growing demands for action from governments, workers' and employers' organizations, industry leaders, consumer groups, and mining communities themselves. In some areas the problem is particularly acute. ILO research indicates that in Burkina Faso and Niger, some 30-50 percent of the gold mine workforce is comprised of children; most are under the age of 15, and some work under conditions of forced labor. Children in Peru work in informal and small-scale mining, particularly for gold, sometimes in situations of forced labor, and are exposed to hazards, including mercury and harmful gases, wall and mine collapses, landslides, and explosives accidents. Child labor is also found in cobalt and coltan mines, minerals used in portable electronic devices and rechargeable batteries, including the batteries of electric cars. More than half of the world's supply of cobalt comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where children, some as young as seven years of age, work in life-threatening conditions, subject to violence, extortion and intimidation.



Children at work mining for gold in The Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNICEF data shows that some 40,000 children – many of them from families who have been displaced – work in mines in the DRC, mostly digging for cobalt used in mobile phones and electric cars.

Child labor in mining is most often found in artisanal and small-scale mines where the children often dig with their bare hands. Artisanal miners do hazardous work for the equivalent of just a few dollars a day. Cumulatively, the amount of minerals from artisanal and small-scale mines is significant and usually added to a larger supply of industrial-mined minerals. It is estimated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that artisanal and small-scale mining accounts for about 20 percent of the global gold supply, 80 percent of the worldwide sapphire supply, 20 percent of the global diamond supply, 15 percent of cobalt and 25 percent of tin. Some 40 million people work in artisanal and small-scale mines, a number the ILO states has doubled in recent years, compared with 7 million in industrial mining. More than one million of these are children. This serious violation of children's rights puts children's health and safety at risk and deprives them of an education. (Child Labor in Mining and Global Supply Chains, ILO)

Prayer

God of hope and peace, touch our hearts and energize our ongoing efforts in abolishing human trafficking, a heinous crime against humanity, so that every victim is freed and every survivor's life renewed. You blessed St. Josephine Bakhita of Sudan with compassion for others. May her prayers comfort and strengthen the women, men, and children who are in search of freedom.

We pray for children engaged in the dangerous work of crushing and grinding soil and panning for minerals with bare hands.

We ask for transformation of heart for those who inflict pain, anguish and grief on our vulnerable sisters and brothers. Give us generosity to stand in solidarity with others so that together we heal the hearts and lives of all Your people.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen

<https://alliancetoendhumantrafficking.org/>

Test your Knowledge!

What do you know about forced labor modern slavery, human trafficking and child labor?

Take this quick quiz:

<https://www.alliance87.org/resources/learn>

Reflection

Minerals like cobalt, nickel and lithium are vital to renewable energy and battery technologies. However, the mining processes that extract those minerals have a serious human rights problem.

- 1) Research the policies of your cell phone company to see how they protect miners in the countries where they source minerals.
- 2) How do we ensure a just transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy?
- 3) Look up your favorite product and research where it is produced and how workers are treated.

International Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Committee

Beatrice Lesourd (France), Sr. Chris Webb (USA), Sr. Gumercinda Cordova Cordova (Peru), Sr. Maria Pintado Peña (Peru) Co-chair, Sr. Nathalie Lundolo Ninga (France), Nick Stein (USA), Rachel Moccia (USA), Sr. Rosa Elena Lozada Escobar (Peru) Simone Blanchard (USA), Chair