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An eco-theological analysis of the Eglise du Christ au Congo's pastoral response to mineral resources-based conflicts in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo

By

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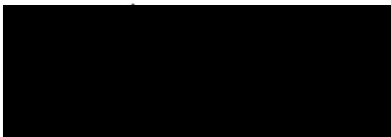
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DECLARATION

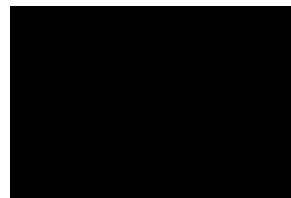
I, Serge Nsaka Matanda (Student Number: 219085949), declare that:

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Serge Nsaka Matanda



Prof Federico Settler (Supervisor)



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God Almighty, for the grace, wisdom, and strength bestowed upon me throughout my studies, and to my parents, Rene Mwangal Nsaka and Maxelene Namwand. I also dedicate this work to my brothers and sisters, Rosie, Jean-Luc, Philippe, Morene, Chancelle, Idrice, Christelle, Sikola, Irene, and my cousin Isabelle, for their sacrifices and love during this period of study.

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the multifaceted conflict dynamics in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with a specific focus on the impact of mineral resources on these conflicts. Through a systematic review of literature and scholarly debates, this study explores various approaches to understanding and addressing the mineral-based conflicts in the region. Furthermore, the dissertation examines the role of the Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC) in engaging with and responding to these conflicts from a pastoral and theological perspective. By shedding light on the complexities of mineral-based conflicts in the Eastern region of DRC and the interventions of religious institutions, this research contributes to the broader discourse on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in resource-rich, but conflict-affected regions.

In recent years, the eastern region of the DRC has been plagued with multifaceted conflicts, characterised by violence, human rights abuses, and the displacement of populations. One of the key drivers of these conflicts is the abundance of mineral resources in the region, which has led to competition and exploitation by various armed groups and external actors. This study considers the economic, political, and social dimensions of these conflicts, as well as the impact on local communities and the environment. By synthesizing existing knowledge, the research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the root causes and consequences of mineral-based conflicts in the region.

Furthermore, the dissertation explores the role of the ECC in engaging with and responding to these conflicts. Churches have long been influential institutions in the DRC, with a strong presence in local communities. This research examines how churches have used their moral authority and religious networks to promote peace and reconciliation and provide pastoral care amid the conflict. It also considers the theological perspectives about the value and care of the environment that might underpin engagement with questions of forgiveness, justice, and human dignity in the pursuit of peace.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader discourses on pastoral care as it relates to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in resource-rich, but conflict-affected regions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ACN | Aid to the Church in Need |
| ACT | Church International Together |
| AMZ | Artisanal mining zones |
| ASM | Artisanal and small-scale mining |
| CENCO | National Episcopal Conference of the Congo |
| CNDP | Congrès National pour la défense du peuple |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisations |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| EITI | Extractive Sectors Transparency Initiative |
| ECC | Eglise Du Christ Au Congo |
| FARDC | Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Force Armée de la République Démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) |
| FDLR | Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda) |
| FPR | Rwandan Patriotic Front (Front Populaire Rwandais) |
| ICD | Inter-Congolese dialogues |
| ICGLR | International Conference on the Great Lakes Region |
| IDP | International displaced persons |
| MFA | Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs |
| MNC | Multinational corporations |
| NTJRC | National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the heart of North Kivu, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been marred by a prolonged conflict over mineral resources. Against this backdrop, I began my studies as a Congolese student, seeking refuge and opportunity in South Africa since 2014. Amidst the turmoil, and with my roots firmly planted in the Methodist Church, which is a member of the Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC), I embarked on a journey of academic studies in Practical Theology.

My interest in this field is driven by a deep sense of purpose and compassion because I witnessed the devastating impact of conflict on my homeland and the ways in which my family became scattered across the Southern African Development Community.

My research is not just a scholarly pursuit; it is a testament to resilience and empathy. It is a commitment to understanding and alleviating the suffering of those affected by war; a dedication to providing solace and support through the healing power of pastoral care. I believe that my journey is a poignant reminder that amidst the chaos, some rise, not just for themselves but for the greater good.

As I delve into the depths of this research, my family's story serves as a reminder and a motivation that from the ashes of conflict a new narrative can emerge. A narrative of healing, understanding, and compassion. This journey underscores not only the transformative power of education but the creative potential of pastoral care for transforming and renewing the church, its people and God's creation.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo is known for its wealth in mineral resources, including gold, diamonds, coltan, and tin. The extraction and trade of these resources has been a major driver of economic activities in the region. With the presence of valuable natural mineral resources, there is an unbalanced repartition of the benefits of those resources. Although the DRC is endowed with a wide variety of natural resources, the country is still under-developed (Geenen and Claessens, 2013), due to the extractive trade by multinationals that take the wealth out of the country and poor governance of the country's natural resources.

According to Renzi (2021), the DRC is the fifth-largest copper producer in the world and provides over 60% of the world's cobalt needs. The DRC is also the world's largest producer of tin and the fourth-largest producer of diamonds. Additionally, gold, crude oil, zinc, and tin are found in different regions of the country. It is also important to note the presence and the production of oil in the country. Ironically, despite the presence of all these rich mineral resources, the DRC is still among the world's poorest nations. In 2019, 77% of people in the country were living below the \$1.90 per day poverty threshold (Renzi, 2021:515). In the UNDP's 2018 Human Development Index, the DRC was rated 176th place overall out of 189 nations due to socio-economic inequality resulting from the lack of management and unequal distribution of benefits from mineral resources. In addition, the DRC government is not improving the management of institutional and political processes at either the national or the local level to ensure that natural resources are used sustainably to improve the lives of communities (Renzi, 2021). According to Mantz, one of the critical minerals discovered in the DRC is coltan, short for columbium-tantalite, which serves as the foundation for a worldwide high-tech supply chain (Mantz, 2018). Many analysts contend that the DRC conflict and the existence of rival militias are driven in part by the fact that the majority of the world's coltan reserves, about 80%, are found in the DRC, and other parts of Africa. Coltan has become known as one of the main resources that Congolese rebels and other groups have stolen from the DRC (Mantz, 2018).

Natural resource management remains a low priority for political stakeholders, many of whom favour the consolidation of their own power and wealth. The presence of those stakeholders, who instigate and profit from instability, constitutes the major obstacle to managing natural resources effectively and making overall improvements in governance in the DRC. In 1990, the former president of Zaire (DRC) introduced some political reforms leading to a conflict called the "War of Liberation" from 1996 to 1997 and a civil war that raged in the country from 1998 to 2003. Mineral resources are among the main reasons for the two conflicts which have since drawn in surrounding nations. The humanitarian crisis in the region is made worse by the fact that most displaced persons from surrounding countries are currently found in the eastern and central regions of the DRC where roughly five million people are affected (Burnley, 2011).

The Eastern Region has been marked by a long history of conflict, and these conflicts often arise from the competition for control over, and exploitation of mineral resources, exacerbating existing social and political tensions (Jacquemot, 2010:6). Congo's natural wealth in mineral resources has often been identified either as the main driver of the conflict to finance warring parties, or as a warfare objective. Over the years, the

United Nations has repeatedly issued harrowing reports through its pillar institutions namely, the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General. underlining that the natural resources have fuelled the conflicts in the DRC (De Luca, 2012:3). Among others, coltan, a high-value mineral, which is used in the manufacturing of electronic devices, has been designated as one of the main accelerators of the Congo wars by Prunier (2009), and Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers's (2004) work on the Ituri conflict. Their work provides a more nuanced picture of the relationship between minerals and conflict in the region. Both studies present a detailed account of the continued exploitation of natural mineral resources and the sparked and sustained violent conflicts in the DRC's Great Lakes region. These studies describe violence as being the consequence of an explosive mix of inherited grievances, ethnic polarization, land scarcities, regional control by foreign powers, and natural wealth. They argue that the international community overemphasises mineral exploitation as the cause of conflict which leads to inappropriate action and the exacerbation of violence. It is hardly deniable, however, that many Congolese mining locations have been looted and the minerals exported illegally over the years by both Congolese and foreign rebels, as well as by neighbouring countries' militias (Giacomo De Luca, 2012: 3).

1.2 Social and Theological Motivation of the Study

The mineral resource-based conflict has had profound socio-economic implications for the local communities in the Eastern Region. It has led to the displacement of populations, disruption of livelihoods, and the exacerbation of poverty and inequality, as well as the unregulated extraction and smuggling of mineral resources which have contributed to environmental degradation in the Eastern Region. Deforestation, water pollution, and soil degradation are some of the environmental issues resulting from these activities (Galli et al, 2022:15).

Much of the mining activity in the DRC, particularly in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector, is characterised by poor labour conditions, including child labour, unsafe working environments, and lack of labour rights. Miners often work in hazardous conditions without proper protective gear (Faber and Krause, 2017:5). Mining activities release hazardous chemicals into soil and water sources, leading to pollution and long-term environmental damage. This contamination affects both local ecosystems and downstream communities. Dust and emissions from mining activities contribute to air pollution, affecting both the health of local populations and the overall air quality. Erosion caused by mining and deforestation degrades the

quality of soil, reducing its productivity for agriculture, and resource scarcity undermines the livelihoods of local communities that depend on farming, fishing, and other traditional activities (Pourret, 2016:44).

The ECC is a prominent religious association or council of churches in the region, representing various denominations. The ECC plays a significant role in the lives of the local communities and is often engaged in social and community development initiatives (Mananga, 2020:1). The Churches within the ECC network in the East of DRC initiated a peacebuilding agenda with the help of Norwegian donors. They facilitated reconciliation between Banyamulenge (Congolese people who originated from Rwanda) and local ethnic groups. However, the Church was unable to control the development of ethnic tension. Some protestant churches in Eastern DRC broke up the agenda into distinct ethnic communities and brought up a territorial division (Jordhus-Lier & Braathen, 2013:115). Understanding the church's involvement and response to the mineral resources-based conflict is crucial in assessing its impact and effectiveness in addressing the challenges faced by the affected communities (Mananga, 2020:1-2).

Many pastoral and theological efforts have been made by Congolese Churches for peacebuilding in the DRC, forcing the ECC to change its structure in 1960, resulting in ecumenical unity in the Church (body of Christ). The new structure was also intended to bring the ECC together to fight violence and injustice by providing reconciliation and peacebuilding in the community. Buruli (2016) argues that although the Church has been playing a significant role in responding to social matters and attempts to build a peaceful society in the DRC from colonization to the present day, no sustainable peace has been found in the East of DRC.

More than 90% of the population in the DRC is thought to be Christian. The ministry of reconciliation is one that God has entrusted to the Church, and the ECC in the DRC has been actively involved in the socio-political life of the Congolese people. For many years, it has also offered public services including hospitals and schools. As a result of its dominance in the DRC, the ECC has an obvious influence over the Congolese people's daily lives. It also has the mandate to foster national unity, expose corruption, poor management, and disproportionate sharing of mineral resources, and take a loving stance for the oppressed (Machumu, 2012:2). The ECC may ask other nations' churches, as well as those from the worldwide community, to participate in the process and encourage peace in their own nations. Any conflict or poverty in the Eastern Region of the DRC will inevitably have a detrimental effect on its neighbours, and that effect may even extend to the entire nation. It is necessary to urgently end the ongoing conflict caused by mineral resources in the

Eastern DRC for the benefit of the entire country, its neighbours, and the continent. Africa as a continent and not just the Congolese people, needs the peace and development of the DRC (Kumutombo 2017:3).

The ECC has been considered to be one of the biggest religious organisations for peacebuilding in the DRC for centuries. Based on the failure of the government, the Catholic Church and other religious groups initiated social services and development processes. The involvement of the ECC in such activities typifies the important influence of religious networks in transforming conflict situations to engender sustainable peacebuilding and development (Marg 2009:87). The ECC, through the Catholic Social Teaching, emphasises principles of social justice, human dignity, and the common good. Applying these principles to the context of mining, especially in regions marked by conflict or social tension due to resource extraction, integrates ethical considerations into mining practices, such as respecting the rights of local communities, ensuring fair labour practices, and minimizing environmental damage. However, people have not totally adopted these (Miller, 2022:204).

This research aims expressly to provide an eco-theological analysis (de Gruchy, 2010; Keller 2018) of the exploitation of mineral resources in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo, and the ensuing conflict over these mineral resources. Finally, I propose eco-theological and pastoral approaches available to the ECC and its efforts to bring effective conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and sustainable development to the region. In other words, how the church's eco-theological perspective emphasises the concept of stewardship over natural resources and the responsibility to care for the environment. I investigate how these principles shape the ECC's pastoral response to the conflict and mineral extraction's environmental impacts.

1.3 Location of the study

The research will be carried out in the Eastern region of the DRC, situated in Central Africa. It aims to examine the occurrences that happened between January 1996 and 2020, focusing on the efforts made by the Church and various organisations in promoting peacebuilding.

1.4 Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following two-fold question:

How might an eco-theological perspective deepen the ECC's engagement with, and critique of the conflicts in the Eastern Regions of the DRC?

The question of how an eco-theological perspective might deepen the ECC engagement, and critique of the conflicts in the Eastern Regions of the DRC, can be answered by breaking the problem down into the following sub-questions:

- Firstly, in what ways, and to what extent are the extraction and trade of mineral resources the primary drivers of the conflict in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo?
- Secondly, how has the ECC demonstrated active theological and pastoral involvement in fostering peace, reconciliation, and social justice in Eastern DRC?
- And lastly, how can the ECC utilise eco-theology in its pastoral care related to the mineral-based conflicts in the Eastern region of the DRC?

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Methodology

Due to the ongoing armed conflicts and instability, particularly in the eastern regions, I have elected to conduct a desktop study. A desktop study is a type of research and analysis that is usually conducted without fieldwork or physical surveys, and will be comprised entirely of a systematic review of literature from both scholarly publications and reports published by government and non-government stakeholders. It entails obtaining and evaluating pre-existing data, information, and resources from multiple sources that are presently in the public domain. In this regard, I draw on reports and publications from numerous disciplines, including environmental science, engineering, business, and the human and social sciences more broadly. (Bonczyk, 2011). The decision to complete systematic literature review is due to the fact that the region is still embroiled in violent conflict, making access to research participants precarious. Having said that, I don't want to reinvent the wheel and thus acknowledge that a great deal of high quality research has been done in, and about the region during the last 20 years, and thus I rely on pre-existing data rather than proposing to gather new data. I believe that the existing secondary data provides a more than ample basis for me to do

a critical reflection on the role of the church in engaging with the mireal-based conflicts, and their efforts to bring peace to the region.

These conflicts create a volatile and unsafe environment, making it challenging for researchers to operate freely and safely. The presence of armed groups and militias further hinders data collection efforts. Also, DR Congo faces challenges in terms of communication infrastructure, including limited internet connectivity and unreliable power supply. These infrastructure gaps make it difficult to transmit and access information, particularly in remote areas where connectivity is scarce. However, a wealth of research has been done by researchers, human rights, and climate activists, as well as by a range of humanitarian organisations which meant that quality and reliable data was available for me to conduct a meaningful study and analysis.

Considering the main objective of this research, the See-Judge-Act methodology will be used. Explicitly, this methodology consists of questioning, analysing, and proposing better propositions, or doing social analytical mediation, hermeneutic mediation, and pastoral practice mediation. This method originates from the Marxist method of analysis and has been simplified by Joseph Leo (Koermer, 1997). In philosophy the See-Judge-Act methodology has been linked to the epistemological idea of Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984): it contains experience, understanding, judgement, and decision. It means that taking decisions needs to be in relationship with the way of knowing reality. Bernard Lonergan described the See-Judge-Act method as the cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding the judgement, from judgment to the complex context of correct judgment that is named knowledge (Lonergan, 2022). Regarding the fields of theology, this methodology has been used more in systematic theology. Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff's approach to the See-Judge-Act methodology focused on the liberation of the oppressed. They noticed the situation and asked themselves the question, "Why is there oppression?" They then started analysing the situation by observing the true reasons for oppression (Sands, 2018).

Erin Brigham (2018) described the See-Judge-Act methodology as a widely recognised approach used in social analysis and decision-making processes within the context of Catholic social teaching. It involves three interconnected steps: See, Judge, and Act. When applied to a critical analysis of the mineral resources-based conflict in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo and the ECC's pastoral commitment, this methodology can provide a framework for understanding the situation, evaluating its ethical dimensions, and guiding appropriate action. Let's explore each step in detail:

- A. **See: The first step**, "See," involves observing and gathering information about the conflict and its underlying factors (Kelly, 2017). This step aims to develop a comprehensive and objective understanding of the situation. It includes conducting research and data collection to identify the key factors, causes, and consequences of the mineral resources-based conflict in the Eastern Region of the DRC. It also examines the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the conflict on local communities, as well as investigating the role of the ECC and its pastoral commitment to addressing the conflict and supporting affected communities. This step also identifies relevant stakeholders, their perspectives, and their positions on the conflict.

In chapters 2 and 3, I explain what is going on, highlighting causes and impacts of the conflict in the DR -, such as leadership from government, invasion by neighbouring countries, the influence of external influences , the misuse of public resources, the flood of refugees from neighbouring Rwanda during 1994 genocide. All these elements allow me to map what can be 'seen" as the state of the DRC, and in particular the serious environmental and human rights issues related to mineral mining.

- B. **Judge: The second step**, "Judge," involves analysing and evaluating the information gathered in the "See" phase from an ethical perspective (Caron, 2020). This step aims to assess the situation based on principles of justice, solidarity, human dignity, and the common good in the East region of the DRC. Key considerations may include: assessing the social and environmental injustices resulting from the mineral resources-based conflict, such as human rights violations, displacement, and environmental degradation; evaluating the ethical implications of the ECC's pastoral commitment to peacebuilding, reconciliation, and social justice; analysing the root causes of the conflict, including resource exploitation, corruption, and governance challenges, through an ethical lens, and considering the principles of Catholic social teaching, such as preferential options for the poor, subsidiarity, and solidarity, in evaluating the conflict and the church's response.

In Chapter 4, I offer critiques by the church of the living conditions of people, but I also offer a critique of the church myself, and from other stakeholders. Through this posture of judging, I will shows how ECC consistently promotes peace and justice through their talk but fall short at translating this into practices that involves local people, and that take the environment into account. This is the second part of my methodological approach.

- C. **Act: The third step**, "Act," involves developing and implementing appropriate actions based on the analysis and ethical judgment made in the previous steps (McRorie, 2021). This step aims to promote positive change, reconciliation, and sustainable development. Key actions may include: advocating for policy changes to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure more equitable resource management, supporting peacebuilding initiatives and reconciliation processes in collaboration with local communities, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders, enhancing the ECC's capacity to provide pastoral care, support, and empowerment to the affected communities and engaging in dialogue and collaboration with government institutions, international organisations, and other religious institutions to promote peace, justice, and sustainable development.

In this closing methodological move, Chapter 5 outlines the findings of the critiques offered in the previous chapter, and then propose new ways to incorporate eco-theology as pastoral care position in the context of mineral extraction in the DRC. In this closing chapter, I outline three possible ways (theologically, biblically and pastorally) through which the church in Congo can “act” to change its practice and engagement with the conflict. These are very practical and concrete proposals for pastoral action by the ECC to change how they think, and do peacebuilding in the DRC.

By applying the See-Judge-Act methodology, a critical analysis of the mineral resources-based conflict in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo and the ECC's pastoral commitment, can provide a structured approach to understanding the situation, evaluate it ethically, and guide meaningful action towards peace, justice, and the well-being of the affected communities. This methodology aligns with the principles of Catholic social teaching and promotes a holistic approach to addressing complex social issues.

What data will be collected? Gathering data for a critical analysis of the mineral resources-based conflict in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo and the ECC's pastoral commitment involved a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods. In this thesis, the following sources were used to collect data: library, secular media about the ECC, ECC media (Twitter, Facebook), ECC reports, policy documents, pastoral letters, academic articles, and statements from the Eglise du Christ au Congo, government

institutions, NGOs, and international organisations. These sources can provide historical context, highlight existing initiatives, and challenges related to the conflict and the church's pastoral commitment. Take note of any relevant statistics, case studies, or policy recommendations.

1.6 Data Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Pastoral care theory encompasses a range of concepts and principles derived from pastoral theology, psychology, and social sciences. It focuses on providing spiritual and emotional support, guidance, and assistance to individuals and communities facing challenges, crises, and conflicts (Leimgruber, 2022). Kelcourse (2022) noted the tasks carried out by Church leadership are known as pastoral care. A shepherd who leads people from all walks of life: leaders are seen as such in Christianity. This suggests a kind of religious or spiritual counselling that helps people get through challenging situations. Providing sermons is only one aspect of a pastor's care; other facets are also included. Leaders' positions are highlighted through actions like providing counselling, attending to the sick, and participating in social events. In the context of the mineral resources-based conflict, pastoral care theory can be applied to understand how the ECC engages with the affected communities and responds to their needs.

Pastoral care theory will serve as a theoretical framework for conducting a critical analysis of the mineral resources-based conflict in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Congo and the ECC's pastoral commitment. This theory provides a lens through which to understand and evaluate the church's role in promoting peace, reconciliation, and social justice in the context of the conflict. Here is an expanded explanation of the pastoral care theory used as a theoretical framework:

Pastoral Role and Responsibility: Mc Clure (2012) emphasises the church's responsibility to provide care, nurturance, and support to individuals and communities. In the context of the conflict, it examines how the ECC assumes its pastoral role and engages with the affected communities, acknowledging their suffering, addressing their spiritual needs, and promoting healing and restoration.

Active Listening and Presence: For others, pastoral care theory emphasises active listening and being present with those experiencing conflict and trauma. (Rieger, 2012). It will be used to explore how the ECC engages in active listening to the voices of the affected communities, empathising with their struggles, and creating safe spaces for them to express their concerns and aspirations.

Advocacy and Social Justice: Pastoral care theory recognises the importance of advocating for social justice and working towards structural change (Van der Watt, 2018). It will explore how the ECC engages in advocacy efforts, addressing the root causes of the conflict, and working towards sustainable solutions. It will examine the church's involvement in promoting equitable resource distribution, challenging oppressive systems, and advocating for the rights and well-being of the affected communities.

Collaborative Engagement: Pastoral care theory recognises the importance of collaborative engagement with various stakeholders (Klaasen, 2018).

Van Arkel (2000) explains that the field of pastoral care has advanced to the point where it is required to distinguish between four distinct types of pastoral service: mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling, and pastoral therapy (Van Arkel, 2000). The first level of care is mutual care, which is the community of believers' concern for upholding and supporting one another. The second level is pastoral care, which focuses on fostering a community of believers via dialogical acts of compassion. Third-tier treatment is pastoral counselling. It involves an agreement or contract for a specific period of time and location. When compared to other professions like psychological counselling, it operates at the entry-level. The fourth level of care, pastoral therapy, addresses deep, persistent issues with reconstructive therapy techniques over a longer time frame. Pastoral therapy is distinct from pastoral counselling in that the former is focused on therapeutic activities while the latter is a part of a broader ministerial role. Now while all of these elements are immediately relevant to the pastoral care offered by the ECC in the conflicts in the Eastern RDC, in this dissertation I am less concerned with the pastoral therapy and pastoral counselling – but more focused on those elements of pastoral care and mutual care that can be applied to how the church thinks about the environment and the earth itself. I argue that the church has a pastoral care and mutual care responsibility to the earth – because it is the earth that sustains us.

Furthermore, pastoral care is the provision of Christian spiritual care to individuals in various public settings. It addresses a range of issues impacting individuals, including spiritual, social, emotional, cultural, political, economic, and others, and aims to help them deal with life's challenges in a meaningful way. Magezi (2018). In this regard, I argue in this dissertation that the forest, rivers and the mines of the DRC are in fact the public spaces where the church ought to be showing care, and where through care for the environment , meaningful change can be effected in local communities and in the church.

It will help to examine how the ECC collaborates with local authorities, civil society organisations, international actors, and other religious institutions to address the conflict. It explores partnerships, networking, and joint initiatives to leverage resources and expertise for effective pastoral care and conflict resolution.

Secondly, eco-theology will be a secondary theological lens through which to read and analyse the situation of the ECC and mineral-based conflict in the DRC. Ernest Conradie defined eco-theology as an effort to address environmental injustices and mistreatment. Eco-theology seeks to rediscover the ecological wisdom of Christianity. In addition, it is an effort to re-examine, rediscover, and revitalise the Christian faith in light of the problems caused by the environmental catastrophe (Conradie, 2006). Steve de Gruchy addresses the theological interpretations of creation, discussing the role of humanity as stewards of the Earth and the implications of this role for environmental ethics (De Gruchy, year?). An eco-theological perspective on the analysis of the ECC's pastoral response to the mineral resources-based conflict in the eastern region of the DRC involves examining the intersection of theological beliefs, environmental ethics, and social justice principles within the context of the conflict. This perspective recognises the interconnectedness of ecological and human well-being and seeks to understand how the church's actions align with its theological teachings about stewardship, compassion, and care for God's creation, and analyses how the church's eco-theological perspective emphasises the concept of stewardship over natural resources and the responsibility to care for the environment. In addition, investigating how these principles shape the ECC's pastoral response to the conflict and mineral extraction's environmental impacts. As modern theologians, Keller and Jandrić (2022) provide a distinctive viewpoint by fusing theological analysis with ecological considerations. The phrase "Creation as Promise" alludes to a theological paradigm in which the idea of creation is understood as an ongoing promise that calls for human stewardship of the planet rather than just as a historical occurrence. Andrew Orr (2017) examines practical applications of eco-theological principles in areas such as environmental activism, eco-spirituality, and community engagement. His ideas may inspire Churches to integrate eco-theological insights into their personal lives and social contexts.

The field of pastoral care and eco-theology are closely related, particularly in light of the growing concerns about mineral extraction, environmental degradation and climate change. When combined, they provide a framework for addressing life's spiritual and ecological aspects and promote a wholistic approach to treating

people, communities, and the environment. I thus offer a more detailed explanation on both pastoral care and eco-theology for a better understanding.

Pastoral Care: as by Magezi's definition, Pastoral care entails offering people or community spiritual direction, care, and support, frequently in a religious or faith-based setting. It typically concentrates on attending to spiritual, relational, and emotional needs. (Magezi, 2020). It is clear from this definition that the objectives of pastoral care encompass encouraging healing, providing consolation during difficult times, fostering spiritual development, and promoting reconciliation within relationships and between people and God. While traditionally, pastoral care has been largely and almost exclusively applied to human subjects only – increasingly pastoral care has, through diaconia, taken an increasingly critical role in questions of human rights and social justice. What I propose here is that such appeals taken further to incorporate our care for the environment and for the restoration of God's earth.

Similarly, Eco-theology, according to Troster (2013), is a study of the connection between religion and the environment. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation and the responsibility of humans to care for the Earth as stewards of God's creation. Troster, (2013) and Orr, (2017) said the contribution of Christian theology to the environmental movement has been to argue that the problems are not simply scientific, however, people need to change their behaviors, and their perspectives as to what they consider their god-given rights to exploit the environment.

A holistic approach to spiritual care is created by combining pastoral care and eco-theology, which takes into account both the health of the earth and the well-being of persons. The teaching of eco-theology motivates pastoral caregivers to incorporate environmental stewardship into their ministry, emphasizing the connection between taking care of creation and taking care of God's people. This entails introducing sustainable practices, educating congregations on environmental issues, and fighting for justice that safeguard the environment. Also, Eco-theology emphasizes the concept of environmental justice, recognizing that the poorest and most vulnerable populations are often the most affected by environmental degradation. Pastoral care, in this context, includes advocating for these communities, addressing the spiritual and physical impact of environmental issues, and working towards justice and equity. Thus as a combined framework or lens through which to view the role of the church in DRC, it offers a strong foundation for dealing with life's spiritual, emotional, and environmental aspects as it affects the people caught in the mineral-based conflicts in the

DRC. It pushes people to view the preservation of creation as a crucial component of their spiritual path and to approach environmental issues with justice, compassion, and a dedication to sustainability for all of God's creation.

1.7 Outline of Research Chapters

This research thesis will be articulated in five chapters:

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Chapter 3 Mineral Extraction, in the DRC and Associated Conflicts

Chapter 4 ECC and the Human/Environmental Crisis in the DRC

Chapter 5 Eco-theology as Pastoral Care in the Context of Mineral Extraction in the DRC.

Key Terms

Natural resources, also referred to as minerals, are accessible without human interference. On a global scale, the World Trade Organization defines minerals as rare and commercially viable commodities that are necessary for consumption or production in either their unprocessed or processed states. As a result, the minerals provide people's basic needs and sustain life on Earth. Natural resources are defined by the World Trade Organization as stocks of materials that are scarce and economically useful for production or consumption, either in their raw form or after a minimal amount of processing. In other words, these naturally occurring materials, found in the earth's ecology, support life on earth and help to meet people's needs (Kennedy, 2015). The term "renewable resources" refers to resources that can be replenished, such as water, sunlight, trees, and timber. However, certain renewable resources are subject to depletion; in contrast, non-renewable resources are those that cannot be replaced. Mineral reserves like cobalt, coal, among other things, coltan, crude oil, diamonds, and others are some of the finite, exhaustible resources. Such resources are employed economically in the manufacture of valuable compounds (Lipow and Melese, 2012).

Mineral resource: Glacken, Snowden, and Edwards (2001) defined mineral resources as a concentration or occurrence of solid material of economic relevance in or on the Earth's crust in such shape, grade, quality, and quantity that there are realistic possibilities for eventual commercial exploitation. Mineral resources are classified into three types based on their geological confidence: inferred, indicated, and measured. Mineral resources are substances or minerals that can be found in the Earth's crust, the atmosphere, or our surroundings that have distinct chemical and physical qualities. When economic value is added to these substances, they are transformed into resources. As a result, mineral resources, which are material reserves in the earth's crust, have economic value (Meinert, Robinson and Nassar, 2016).

Conflict: Baron (2013) elaborated on conflict as a condition of discontent or disagreement between individuals, groups, organisations, or even nations, caused by differences in interests, values, beliefs, needs, or objectives. Conflict can take many different shapes and scales, ranging from small-scale interpersonal disputes to large-scale international confrontations (Baron, 2013). Conflict, according to Thomas (1992), is a process that begins when one party feels that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some of their concerns. A conflict between two norms occurs only when a party to two treaties cannot simultaneously comply with its duties under both treaties (Vranes, 2006).

Church: Hill (1970) said a church is a religious institution or place of worship affiliated with a particular faith or religious tradition. The definition of a church varies by religion, however in Christianity, which is one of the most commonly known religions that uses the term “Church,” it often refers to a congregation of believers who congregate for religious purposes. The church, as the body of Christ, is where divine agency occurs, according to Kumutombo (2017). The exploration of the book of Romans portrays that the Church’s function in society is transformational. The church’s work is to administer sacraments, preach and teach the word of God, shepherd God’s people, serve the underprivileged, and change the world. Kumutombo (2017) stated that the church is a community of people who share in God-consciousness. Additionally, the church is the group that God summons to empower, serve, and equip the community, which also serves as the subject of theology and development studies. A key aspect of the church’s mission is to anticipate the advocacy of mercy and justice in all areas and phases of life. It participates in the development of a divine purpose for creation” and is marked by the righteousness and compassion of God. This community should therefore always be equipped to respond to the problems of any period. Poor people “belong and participate in the church as a community (Kumutombo, 2017). The term “church” is used in this study to refer to the ECC in the DRC.

Pastoral care: Moyo defined pastoral care as the church’s response to human needs such as suffering and lack of wholeness, of which moral harm is an example. People who have suffered catastrophic pathological, spiritual, psychological, and moral wounds as a result of war crimes require pastoral care for recovery and sustenance (Moyo 2015). Pastoral care may be more appealing than professional counselling because it is open to all individuals. People can be more candid with pastors since they are trusted and recognised by society. Pastors are exposed to counselling during seminary training, which helps them serve individuals.¹ Moyo (2015) understood pastoral care as actions of concern, empathy, compassion, kindness, and love by the Church, most often represented by pastors, to people struggling with difficult situations such as disease, being influenced by the spirit realm, and grieving after the death of a significant other.

¹ <https://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-pastoral-care-and-vs-counseling/>

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

After providing the background to the study in the previous chapter, I will offer a systematic review of: firstly, literature and scholarly debates related to some approaches to the conflict in the eastern region of the DRC, secondly, the impact of mineral resources conflict in that region, lastly, my literature review will also deal with the churches pastoral and theological engagements with mineral-based conflict in East of DRC.

2.1 Mineral Resources-Based Conflict in the DRC

Nibishaka (2011) notes that despite having a vast amount of mineral riches in Africa, the DRC has faced violence since its independence. The country has experienced brutal battles in the last twenty-five years, together with an autocratic administration under President Mobutu since the 1960s. He argues that the complexities of violence in the DRC can be attributed to various factors, including bad leadership, invasion by neighbouring countries, the influence of external influences such as the cold war, and misuse of public resources. One of the most widely debated causes of the present violence in the DRC is the flood of refugees from neighbouring Rwanda (Nibishaka, 2011). Moore (2003) noted that the onset of the Rwanda genocide in 1994 drove members of the Hutu population to seek safety in eastern DRC because the Tutsi-led government posed a threat to them. Most of the Hutu refugees who fled to eastern DRC were responsible for the slaughter, and went on to join the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), which heightened insecurity in the region.² Spittaels (2010) highlighted that the DRC is a nation that is endowed with large quantities of valuable mineral resources, and has a host of other natural resources such as forestry, weather resources and large hectares of arable land (approximately 80 million). Wang'ombe (2018) understood that amongst all these resources, mineral resources have stood out in their country due to vast deposits of minerals such as diamond, cobalt, tantalum, copper, gold, and coltan. Coltan is in high demand due to its use in the technology industry, where it is used in electronic equipment such as computers and cell phones.

Hanai (2021) stated that conflict minerals regulation for the DRC refers to efforts aimed at addressing the issue of minerals mined in the DRC and neighbouring countries which are used to fund armed groups and

² <http://www.igd.org.za/pub/OP/OP37.Chap2Moore.html>

perpetuate conflict in the region. The most prominent example of such minerals is the "3TG" minerals: tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold. The conflict minerals regulation primarily gained international attention through Section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, passed by the United States Congress in 2010. This provision requires companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges to disclose whether their products contain conflict minerals sourced from the DRC or adjoining countries. However, Ouko (2017) elaborated that, despite efforts to regulate the trade of conflict minerals in the DRC, there are still loopholes that allow conflict actors to profit from the mineral trade. The complex and dynamic nature of the conflict in the DRC, combined with limited resources and capacity for enforcement, contribute to these challenges. Some of the reasons why conflict actors can exploit regulatory loopholes are: porous borders and smuggling, lack of transparency in the supply chain, inadequate enforcement, and corruption, shifting conflict dynamics. Also, Wakenge et al. (2021) stated that the Congolese artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) industry has been undergoing governmental structure changes for the past 20 years. According to a prominent argument in favor of improvements, artisanal mining fuels violence (including sexual assault), conflicts, underdevelopment, and poverty, notably in the 3T ASM sector (tin, tantalum, and tungsten). They argue that the state's issues in controlling artisanal mining are typically comparable, complex, and, rooted in the region's mining legacy in eastern DRC (Wakenge et al 2021). Recent armed conflicts have only exacerbated already difficult issues. Given the complexities of these concerns, the government has made some headway toward resolution, but it has yet to build a viable model for governing the 3T ASM sector (Wakenge et al., 2021).

The conflict minerals regulation has not been entirely successful in completely eradicating the link between resources and conflict in the DRC. While the regulation aimed to promote responsible sourcing and reduce the financing of armed groups through the mineral trade, it faces significant challenges in implementation and enforcement. Some reasons of the reasons why the regulation has not achieved its intended impact follow. The conflict minerals regulation primarily focused on tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold, and the reporting requirements for companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges. However, other minerals and actors involved in the conflict were not subject to the same level of scrutiny. Furthermore, Diemel and Hillhorst (2019) suggest that enforcing the regulation globally remains a challenge, as compliance mechanisms vary across countries and enforcement is difficult in regions with weak governance. Conflict actors can bypass formal supply chains by smuggling minerals across borders or by mixing conflict minerals with legitimate ones, making it challenging to trace their origin. Burnley (2011) takes a similar view to Diemel and Hillhost. He elaborated that armed groups in the DRC have been a significant source of conflict, specifically regarding

mineral resources. He also said that the presence of valuable minerals, such as coltan, gold, tin, and tungsten, has fueled and perpetuated the conflict in the region. Furthermore, he explained that armed groups establish control over mining sites and territories rich in mineral resources. They exploit these resources by imposing illegal taxes, extorting money from miners, and engaging in the illicit trade of minerals. This control provides them with a significant source of revenue to finance their operations and sustain their armed activities. Competition for control over mining areas and the profits generated from mineral resources has been a major driver of conflicts in the DRC. Burnley (2011) argued that armed groups fight against each other and against state security forces to gain dominance over strategic mining sites, leading to cycles of violence, displacement of communities, and a breakdown of social cohesion. Based on Burnley's (2011) argument it can be understood that the pursuit of mineral wealth by armed groups in the DRC is often accompanied by severe human rights abuses. Sovacool (2019) also noted that these groups are involved in acts of violence, including killings, sexual violence, forced labour, and the recruitment of child soldiers. Burnley (2011) Civilians living in mining areas are particularly vulnerable to these abuses, as armed groups exploit their presence for forced labour and control over the local population, armed groups take advantage of illicit trade networks to smuggle minerals out of the DRC and onto international markets. This enables them to circumvent regulations and profit from the mineral trade, further fueling the conflict and undermining efforts to establish responsible and transparent supply chains (Burnley 2011). Matthysen and Montejano (2013) said, that in the eastern region of the DRC, conflicts related to mineral resources are driven by a combination of factors involving both local communities and external actors. These factors contribute to the perpetuation of violence and instability in the region as local communities and armed groups compete for control over mining areas and the profits generated from mineral extraction. Matthysen and Montejano (2013) argue that, this competition often leads to conflicts, as different factions vie for power, influence, and economic benefits associated with the mineral trade, local armed groups, including community-based militias and rebel factions, exploit mineral resources as a source of revenue to sustain their operations and exert control over mining sites, impose illegal taxes, and engage in illicit trade to finance their activities. This control over mineral resources often fuels conflicts within and between communities. Land ownership, resource allocation, and disputes over access to mining areas contribute to conflicts in the region. They concluded that local communities may have competing claims and grievances related to the control and use of land and resources. These disputes, often intertwined with ethnic and identity-based tensions, can escalate into violence and exacerbate conflicts surrounding mineral resources. External actors, including neighbouring countries, multinational corporations, and regional armed groups, play a significant role in the conflicts related to mineral resources in the eastern DRC; neighbouring

countries may have strategic interests in the region's minerals and may support armed groups to secure access to resources; multinational corporations may inadvertently contribute to conflicts through their supply chains if they fail to ensure responsible sourcing practices.

The war over Mongbwalu's wealth is a prime example of what lies behind the simmering conflicts that have claimed millions of lives throughout eastern Congo. However, disputes rarely occur because of blatant racial animus. Outside parties have long been aware of how simple it is to manage and control eastern DRC, particularly those in Uganda and Rwanda. As part of the second Uganda-Rwanda invasion of the DRC in 1998, the Ugandan army seized control of the Ituri region and originally concentrated on the gold mines in and around the town of Durba, in the haut Uele region north of Ituri, which is a location located about 100 miles north of Mongbwalu (Seay, 2015). The Ugandans forced the locals to work the gold mines at Mongbwalu and each miner had to give the militia one gram of gold every day; the rest was theirs to retain. According to estimates, 2,000 workers mined the concession six days per week on average, giving the militia leader a total of two kilograms (4.4 pounds) of gold per day (Seay, 2015).

2.2 Socio-economic and Environmental Impacts of Resources-Based Conflict

Socio-economic Impact

The conflict has resulted in the loss of countless lives and forced displacement of communities. Civilians are subjected to violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, and are often forced to flee their homes, leading to a humanitarian crisis. Conflict disrupts community cohesion and traditional social structures, leading to the breakdown of trust, cooperation, and social norms. To further exacerbate ethnic tensions, armed groups involved in the mineral trade often recruit child soldiers, subjecting them to physical and psychological harm. Children are denied education and essential rights (Rustad, Ostby and Nordås, 2016).

Perks (2011) also underlined the challenges that women face. She observed that women are engaging in, and are affected by, artisanal mining activities, and encounter challenges in the artisanal mining sector, such as gender-based violence, unequal access to resources, and limited decision-making power. Hayes and Perks (2012) highlighted that livelihood opportunities will be lost and access to resources will be constrained, and the phase of transition from ASM to large-scale industrial mining is fraught with possible conflicts and formidable hurdles. The conflict minerals trade perpetuates a cycle of exploitation, with armed groups profiting from the illegal extraction and smuggling of minerals. The focus on resource exploitation and conflict diverts

attention and resources away from investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Samndong and Nhantumbo, 2015), and as noted by Burnley (2011), most of the Congo Basin, which is rich in biodiversity, wood, and mineral resources, is part of the DRC. However, the DRC is one of the world's poorest nations, with a considerable lack of infrastructure and an economy that is heavily reliant on forests and agriculture. Burnley (2011) argues that the DRC has historically been unable to effectively utilise its natural resources to provide income, improve the quality of life for its population, and boost its economy because of violent and nonviolent conflicts related to their utilisation. Particularly, several policy papers have emphasised how minerals are used to finance armed organisations that are involved in conflicts and economic instability, He concluded that this is the reason why the DRC is one of the world's five poorest countries with 60 million Congolese citizens, or roughly 62% of the population, subsisting on less than \$2.15 per day. In the DRC, one in six individuals lives in abject poverty (Burnley, 2011:8).

Bamana et al., (2021) argued that supply networks for mineral resources are complicated and comprise numerous entities, ranging from small-scale miners to large businesses. It is necessary to gather information from diverse supply chain stakeholders at various stages to fully understand the social implications. Data gathering is made much more difficult by the informal character of some mining activities and the presence of multiple intermediaries. Mineral resources in the DRC have been linked to egregious labour exploitation and violations of human rights, including child labour and hazardous working conditions. The creation of practical solutions to these social problems is hampered by the dearth of reliable data about them (Bamana et al., 2021).

Kelly, King-Close and Perks (2014) stated that the conflict in the eastern region of the DRC has been primarily characterised by two narratives: the horrifying sexual exploitation of women, and the use of "conflict minerals" to fuel the fighting. These two advocacy narratives have a special intersection in ASM communities and can result in inaccurate perceptions of the dynamics of women's experiences in these settings. Although they provide different risks, mining communities are significant hubs of economic activity for women. The topic of women's engagement in non-conflict political and social processes is suppressed by a simplistic presentation of women as victims in mining communities. Even so, these procedures are among the most crucial for ensuring that women have the chance to engage in mining operations in a meaningful way over the long term (Kelly, King-Close and Perks, 2014).

Environmental Impact

Butsic et al. (2015), elaborated that critical ecological services are provided by tropical forests everywhere. Nevertheless, continued mining, timber extraction, and agricultural growth continue to endanger crucial forest resources. A further but poorly understood concern comes from the fact that many tropical forests are found in nations that have recently been embroiled in violent war. Depending on how it interacts with other factors that affect how land is used, such as mining growth or the creation of protected areas, conflict may reduce or increase deforestation. Coghlan et al. (2006) said millions of civilians have died in the DRC, which is home to the second-largest tropical forest in the world. The conflict has lasted for 20 years and even though about 12% of the forest in the DRC is protected in some way, growing mining concessions pose a threat to it.

Baumann et al. (2015) underlined that by using a panel instrumental variables method, they discovered that conflict increased forest cover loss, and mining concessions increased forest cover loss, but their influence was mitigated during the conflict, and protected areas reduced forest cover loss, even in high conflict areas, particularly in regions with little mining potential. Policy changes intended to minimise violent conflict may also have the unintended consequence of lowering deforestation. Similarly, protected places can be useful even during times of conflict. According to Muimba-Kankolongo et al. (2021), dust and particulate matter released into the air lead to air pollution. This pollution harms plants, animals, and overall ecosystem health in the DRC and it also contributes to the degradation of soil quality and hinders the growth of vegetation. In some mining operations, forests are cleared to make way for mining activities, leading to deforestation. They concluded that this loss of forest cover disrupts local ecosystems, leads to habitat destruction, and threatens biodiversity (Muimba-Kankolongo et al., 2021). Srivastava et al. said unregulated mining activities, including illegal artisanal mining, often lead to deforestation, habitat destruction, and soil erosion (Srivastava, 2023). The use of harmful chemicals in extraction processes contaminates water sources, affecting both human and ecological health. The destruction of habitats and ecosystems due to mining activities threatens biodiversity and endangers unique species in the region. The loss of biodiversity has long-term consequences for ecosystem functioning and resilience (Srivastava et al., 2023:17). Sovacool (2019), similarly to Srivastava et al., said that the mining industry in the DRC disregarded and violated human rights protections which resulted in workplace accidents and hazards, environmental pollution, and deteriorated community health. Galli et al. (2022) pointed to alluvial diamonds as a significant alternative source of income for subsistence farmers, but they also have several socio-environmental effects, such as deforestation, river pollution, the exploitation of water resources, and unpleasant, unregulated, and occasionally hazardous labour situations.

2.3 ECC's Pastoral Commitment in DRC Conflicts

According to Elias (2021), the ECC is an ecumenical Christian organisation that unites more than sixty-four denominations in the DRC, and it plays a significant role in the country's religious and social landscape. The ECC is committed to pastoral work and has been actively engaged in conflict resolution efforts in the DRC. The ECC carries out an internal and an external mission, as stated in its constitution. She pursues careers in evangelism, Christian education, and Diakonia at the domestic level. The ECC is socially visible through temples, schools, hospitals, agricultural and development operations, and is present and active throughout the nation. Through its missionary purpose, the ECC sends its members abroad to evangelise while also fostering positive relationships with foreign Churches and global Christian organisations and the ECC strives to be a truly organised, democratic, independent, powerful, and missionary Church (IoECC Website, 2023)³.

More than 90% of the population in the DRC is thought to be Christian. The ministry of reconciliation is one that God has entrusted to the Church and the ECC in the DRC has been actively involved in the socio-political life of the Congolese people. For many years, it has also offered public services including hospitals and schools. As a result of its dominance in the DRC, the ECC has an obvious impact on the Congolese people's daily lives. It also has the mandate to foster national unity, expose corruption, poor management, and disproportionate sharing of mineral resources, and take a loving stance for the oppressed (Machumu, 2012). The ECC may ask other nations' Churches, as well as those from the worldwide community, to participate in the process and encourage peace in their own nations. Any conflict or poverty in the Eastern region of the DRC will inevitably have a detrimental effect on its neighbours, and that effect may even extend to the entire nation. It is urgently necessary to end the ongoing conflict arising from mineral resources in the Eastern DRC, for the benefit of the entire country, its neighbours, and the continent. Africa as a continent, not just the Congolese people, needs the peace and development of the DRC (Kumutombo 2017).

The following statements were issued by the ECC's national executive committee in Kinshasa in February 2018: "Conscious of the mission entrusted to us by the Lord Jesus Christ to cultivate and protect creation, including the DRC, let us recall the following facts by our declaration to Congolese people on 23 November

³ <http://www.ecc.faithweb.com/>

2017 to practice consciousness and collective building for people to live joyfully and protect everything in the DRC.”⁴

According to Biruli (2019), the ECC has played a vital role in mediating conflicts and promoting peace within communities affected by violence. It has acted as a mediator between conflicting parties, bringing together community leaders, armed groups, and government representatives to negotiate and facilitate dialogue. The ECC has been actively involved in advocating for peace, justice, and human rights. It raises awareness about the consequences of conflicts and advocates for peaceful resolutions. Additionally, Makitu (2019), said the ECC provides humanitarian assistance to communities affected by violence, offering support in areas such as food security, healthcare, and psychosocial support. The ECC emphasises reconciliation and healing as integral parts of its pastoral commitment. It encourages forgiveness, reconciliation, and the restoration of broken relationships within communities affected by conflict. The ECC supports programmes and initiatives that promote dialogue, truth-telling, and healing processes to address the wounds caused by violence.

Kumutombo (2017) said that the ECC actively engages with other religious and faith-based organisations in the DRC to foster interfaith cooperation in conflict resolution. It recognises the importance of collaboration and solidarity among different religious groups in promoting peace, social cohesion, and mutual understanding. He added that the ECC recognises the significance of peace education and conflict transformation in building sustainable peace. It integrates peacebuilding and conflict resolution teachings into its theological training programs, equipping pastors and church leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to address conflicts within their congregations and communities. Kumutombo (2017) and Kenge (2015) underlined that the ECC promotes peacebuilding and reconciliation as essential components of its response to conflict. It organises peace dialogues, facilitates mediation processes, and supports reconciliation initiatives at the community level. These efforts aim to foster understanding, promote dialogue, and restore relationships within, and between, communities. Kenge (2015) also said that the ECC recognises the importance of education and skills training in the long-term recovery of communities affected by conflict. It invests in educational programmes, including schools and vocational training centres to provide access to quality education and equip individuals with practical skills for sustainable livelihoods. The ECC focuses on strengthening community resilience to mitigate the impacts of conflict. It supports community-based initiatives, such as peace committees and local governance structures, to enhance community cohesion,

⁴ <https://www.defap.fr/2018/03/23/rdc-congo/?print=pdf.declaration-de-leglise-du-christ-au->

promote social stability, and enable communities to better respond to future challenges (Kenge, 2015) but, according to Seay (2013), the ECC's efforts, although impactful at the local level, may face limitations in terms of scale and reach. The magnitude of the conflict in the DRC requires broader interventions and partnerships to address the widespread challenges faced by communities. Limited resources and infrastructure may hinder the ECC's ability to reach all conflict-affected areas (Seay, 2013). While Benn (2017) proposed that the ECC's initiatives promote sustainable development, the long-term sustainability of these interventions may be a challenge. Ensuring the continuity and institutionalisation of programmes beyond initial implementation is crucial to achieving lasting impacts. External factors, such as ongoing conflicts and economic instability, can also pose obstacles to sustainable development efforts.

According to Houston (2018), the ECC's work in conflict-affected areas exposes its staff and volunteers to security risks. Insecurity and the presence of armed groups can impede the effectiveness and implementation of the ECC's initiatives, potentially limiting their impact on promoting peace and reconciliation. Strengthening the capacity of local communities and ECC members is essential for sustainable impact. Building the skills and knowledge of local actors in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and sustainable development can enhance the long-term effectiveness of the ECC's efforts. The ECC's leadership in the final report of the second national symposium, on the issue of mining, found that, the Church must not be in the middle of the village and remain without a position. Like the chaplains, she must remain at the side of those who bring peace. She must raise her voice to plead for the cause of the oppressed and solve problems rather than appease them, was one of the resolutions from this symposium. The ECC avails itself to provide the necessary information enabling the Congolese political authorities to establish anti-mine legislation, set up a national structure for the fight against mining, as well as create a commission to support victims of mining and working in mining.⁵ Kenge (2015) said that the ECC office had been highly active in many provinces, working with the United Nations and other groups, to convince children, who were working in mining and used by the 145 rebels, to lay down their weapons, leave the bush, and integrate into society. Almost all armed factions in the area have used minors to commit murder and other atrocities. Heavy medications are administered to them to brainwash them and make them perform whatever the warlord's commands. For the sake of national security and the preservation of the children's lives, their rescue remains urgent and necessary, as, while serving in the militia, these children will never have a future of their own. Some engage in illegal mining to make a living, but their earnings are insufficient, while others are compensated when they

⁵ http://bibliomines.org/wp-content/uploads/rapport_final_du_2eme_colloque_sur_la_problematique_des_mines.pdf

raid a hamlet and take all they can find. Sometimes they are compelled to stay with the rebels because if they leave, the rebels will most likely go after them in vengeance, endangering their lives and the lives of their loved ones. The easiest way to categorise them is as slave militias (Kenge, 2015).

The ECC, in an eco-theological analysis and response to mineral resources-based conflict and environmental impact, provides valuable insight into how faith-based organisations engage with pressing socio-environmental challenges in resource-rich regions of the DRC. Dalton (2006) stated that religious conceptions, practices, and texts are thought to be the source of many ecological issues. It follows that spiritual and religious practices must also serve as the foundation for any solutions to ecological concerns., Rayson and Lovat (2014), understood that theology and religion are among the human sciences that must confront the change in climate conditions since it is widely acknowledged that it is mostly caused by human activity. Due to the obvious effect of religion on many ideas and actions, religious organisations must participate in the public discussion of issues of international concern. In other words, faith should be lived out in the secular world, which could be extended to the care for God's creation. The ECC, after its second conference in 2007, offered the recommendations that follow: the government needs to set up a national structure for the fight against illegal mining; develop a preliminary draft of the national plan, and elaborate a preliminary draft of the legislation on the fight against illegal mining (ECC 2023).

Ouko (2017), understood that the fundamental source of the DRC's natural resource conflict is the country's leadership failure to build effective institutions and a solid regulatory natural resource management framework in the sector. Despite multiple efforts by the country's subsequent governments to reform the minerals sector, the endorsed modifications, including rewriting of the mining rules, have failed to address several difficulties affecting the DRC's natural resource industry. Most analysts think that mining law revisions tend to promote inbound foreign investment rather than long-term growth. In 2016, Rev François-David Ekofo, the ECC president at that time, linked the same idea and presented a very critical sermon towards the Congolese government during the memorial of the death of Congolese former Laurent Désiré Kabila, slain on 16 January 2001, underlining the need to be accountable as the Lord made us to be stewards of the world. Psalm 115:16 is the source for this verse. He also attacked the country's transportation infrastructure, lack of food security, and inability to allow its people to benefit from mineral wealth. He went on to say "We have plenty of oil and coltan, which is in high demand all over the world. We have gold, diamonds, and so forth. It is a sin for the DRC to be impoverished. We should be among the world's wealthy nations invoking the historical imperative for Congolese to preserve the country's unity and not leave a split country to our

children.” Rev Francois David Ekoko then outlined the problems with which he believes the DRC is plagued, “First and foremost, the State's weakness. We must bequeath our children a country in which the State is truly present. I mean, seriously. Because I have the sensation that the State does not exist in its entirety” (Ekoko, 2018).⁶ Katie Kreutter (2012) stated that, for ages, the biblical exhortation for humans to behave as good stewards of the earth has been viewed through numerous lenses. Every day, Christians and non-believers alike make decisions about food and resources, both natural and manufactured. She also noted that these decisions affect their quality of life, the well-being of other people and creatures around the world, as well as the state of the planet itself. Various interpretations of Genesis 1:28 have resulted in attitudes towards consuming that range from conscientious to exploitive. In other words, Kreutter says that eco-theology encourages ethical and responsible use of natural resources (Kreutter, 2012). The ECC advocates for stricter regulations and enforcement of mining permits and licenses to ensure that mining activities do not harm the environment, exploit local communities, or perpetuate conflict.

According to Burili (2019), although the government's peacebuilding efforts temporarily ended the Kivu war, they failed to establish a lasting peace. The ECC presented itself as uniting many ethnic groups that had suffered because of the war, and children that joined armed groups in the mining areas. The strategy was focused on resolving difficulties, especially uniting disparate groupings. ECC addressed the problems that started, inflamed, and continued the conflict. This was accomplished through its strategy of fully integrating the neighbourhood's residents. He added that ECC through members and local offices, was able to travel even in the most remote locations. Even though it has not been resolved due to the renewal and aim of earlier invaders' attacks, identity continues to be a component that supports oppression and structural rage in the Eastern DRC. These elements are linked to the pressure and instability that are still wreaking havoc on the local dynamics. Rivalry, fueled by their low pay, adds to the pressure. Exploitation and impunity are hallmarks of the regime's actions. People have not fully acclimated because of their fear of a new invasion (Biruli, 2019). The ECC, after its second conference of the year in 2007, declared that, on a socioeconomic level, the Congolese people continue to suffer from poverty and precariousness, which is worsening day after day. Biruli (2019) contends that, on a global scale, it is the responsibility of the Church to serve and be a peace agent in the community in which it is active. This is one of the qualities that the Kingdom of God manifests, theologically speaking. The Church in general and ECC, in particular, has, however, occasionally been accused of failing to live out the Bible in this area, as was the case during the colonial era when both the

⁶ <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/514390/politique/rdc-quand-le-pasteur-francois-david-ekofo-sermonne-le-pouvoir>

Church and mission schools split Congolese inhabitants by encouraging them to engage in tribalistic divisions. Mission schools served as a platform for tribal prejudice. Because the Church was given responsibility for education as part of its purpose, the aforementioned mindset even affected education to the point where graduates were ill-prepared for their political future responsibilities. Thus, one could contend that the Church lost its authenticity by upholding the ideologies of the colonisers in every sphere of life. Biruli ended by saying the Church was believed to have failed in its function as a mediator due to bad management during the thirty-two years (1965–1997) of the Mobutu administration in the DRC. This was due to ecclesiastical, personal, and ethnic divisions among its bishops, who were regarded as undermining the Church's competence by improperly exploiting the prophetic position before the reigning dictatorship. (Biruli 2019).

2.4 Eco-Theology and the Church

Hadiwadoyo and Conradie (2015) define eco-theology as a theology that is environmentally conscious and compassionate. According to Leonardo Boff (1997), eco-theology has provided many approaches to address the escalating ecological catastrophe and calls for all parties to work together comprehensively. Spencer (2015) added that eco-theology operates within a reflection-action-reflection framework that assesses attitudes, viewpoints, and environmentally harmful behaviour and encourages collaboration among all stakeholders in addressing the ecological issue. Finally, Hrynkow (2017) emphasised that in providing analysis and suggestions for action, theologians (This means including Church leaders) have to take the environmental situation into account. To address the ecological catastrophe, this idea becomes the fundamental tenet of eco-theology.

According to Deane-Drummond (2012), eco-theology is, in general, a specific form of contextual theology that arises in the unique modern setting of environmental consciousness that has defined the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Pihkala (2017) claims that while this is true for later eco-theology, the subject is not only older and broader than is typically recognised but that the core of eco-theological inquiry is connected to important theological issues. This criticism of the method is made in this statement. So, Pihkala (2017) contends that contextual theology falls short of capturing this relationship. This kind of understanding of eco-theology broadens its scope and establishes links between it and earlier traditions and contributions related to nature, the environment, and creation. Consequently, connecting eco-theological insights to more

antiquated practices like creation theology. Hoffmann (2020) said, even though there may be deeper links between eco-theology and studies in natural theology or creation, for instance, it's still critical to recognise the differences between these various disciplines. Even while studies in these disciplines can be considered contributions to eco-theology, in its modern sense it must nevertheless be defined as a relatively young subject of study that has only recently gained attention. However, grounding this subject in earlier and more reputable insights provides a solid basis for thought and opens up a library of resources that support theological contemplation and discussion of the current environmental issues Eaton (2005), argues that given that religious texts, attitudes, and practices are at the basis of ecological issues, religious and spiritual practices, it must also be the foundation of any remedies to ecological degradation. To envision more comprehensive approaches to addressing the issues facing our time and locations, he gathers and links religious practices, the relationship between humans and the environment, and economic activities in this collection (Eaton, 2005).

Based on the authors' definitions above one could understand that eco-theology, sometimes referred to as eco-spirituality or ecological theology, is a branch of theology that studies the relationships between spirituality, religion, and environmental issues. It was born out of the need to include ecological consciousness in theological and religious discourse in the light of the world's escalating environmental problems. Eco-theology develops a framework for comprehending humanity's relationship with the natural world by frequently drawing on religious traditions, scriptures, and spiritual teachings. The foundation of eco-theology is the conviction that the natural world is precious and has inherent worth. It changes the emphasis from a human-centered worldview to a creation-centered one, highlighting the spiritual significance of the environment and its connectivity with all life. It emphasises humanity's duty as stewards of the Earth and promotes a comprehensive view of the divine that includes the entire cosmos. In addition to encouraging sustainable methods and conservation, it demands moral and responsible interactions with the environment. Certain schools of eco-theology evolve a cosmic Christology, understanding Christ as a cosmic figure engaged in the redemption and renewal of the entire creation, as well as a human saviour.

Eco-theology frequently addresses social, economic, and ecological inequities and promotes the just and equitable sharing of environmental resources. It promotes moral behaviour in daily life, such as lifestyle selections, consumption habits, and support for environmental causes. It can also involve eco-friendly sacraments, rituals, and prayers that emphasise the sanctity of creation and convey appreciation for the gifts of the Earth. Eco-theology frequently results in eco-activism, which is the active participation of believers in

environmental advocacy, conservation initiatives, and campaigns for sustainable policy (Sohr, 2001). Several environmental issues have recently gained attention and are predicted to increasingly do so in the years to come. Exploiting natural resources was not the purpose of God's order to Adam and Eve to populate and rule the planet. One of God's intentions for creating humanity, according to Genesis 1:28, 31, and 2:15, is for us to occupy, govern, and preserve the universe as a habitable place. Pangihutan and Jura (2023), therefore, suggest that to restore ecological balance and foster a harmonious relationship between humanity and the Earth, eco-theology supports educational initiatives that raise ecological literacy and awareness of environmental issues within religious communities. It also encourages dialogue between diverse cultural and religious traditions and recognises that people of all faiths and backgrounds share concerns about the environment. Finally, eco-theology offers a vision of hope and renewal by imagining a harmonious relationship between humanity and the Earth.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review has provided a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical framework and contextual background necessary for the eco-theological analysis of the ECC's pastoral response to mineral resources-based conflict in the eastern region of the DRC. The review has highlighted the complexities of mineral extraction in the DRC and the associated conflicts, shedding light on the environmental, social, and ethical implications of resource exploitation in the region.

Moving forward, this study aims to bridge the gaps identified in the literature by conducting an in-depth eco-theological analysis of the ECC's pastoral response. By integrating theological perspectives with ecological insights, this research seeks to offer a holistic understanding of the church's role in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace in the region. Through this analysis, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on mineral resources-based conflicts in the DRC and provide practical recommendations for the church's engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

CHAPTER 3:

MINERAL EXTRACTION IN THE DRC AND ASSOCIATED CONFLICTS

Mineral extraction in the DRC stands at the intersection of human suffering and environmental degradation, representing a complex crisis with profound local and global implications. This chapter explores the multifaceted dimensions of mineral extraction in the DRC and its associated conflicts, focusing on the role of non-state stakeholders and government efforts to manage these challenges.

At its core, mineral extraction in the DRC is not just an economic activity but a human and environmental crisis. The exploitation of mineral resources, such as coltan, cobalt, and gold, has fueled armed conflicts, human rights abuses, and environmental degradation in the eastern region of the country. This has resulted in the displacement of communities, the proliferation of armed groups, and the degradation of fragile ecosystems, leading to a cycle of poverty and violence that continues to devastate the region.

Non-state stakeholders, including rebel groups, militias, and criminal networks, play a significant role in the mineral-based conflicts in the DRC. These actors exploit the lack of governance and oversight in the mining sector to control and profit from mineral resources, often through violent and illegal means. Their involvement exacerbates the conflicts and undermines efforts to establish peace and stability in the region.

Despite these challenges, the government of the DRC has made efforts to manage mineral extraction and associated conflicts. These efforts include the implementation of legal frameworks, such as the 2002 Mining Code, aimed at regulating the mining sector and promoting transparency and accountability. Additionally, the government has collaborated with international partners and civil society organisations to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable development in mining-affected areas. However, these efforts have been hampered by corruption, weak governance, and the continued presence of armed groups in mineral-rich areas. As a result, the challenges posed by mineral extraction in the DRC persist, highlighting the need for comprehensive and sustainable solutions that address the root causes of conflict and promote responsible mineral governance.

In the following sections, we will delve deeper into each of these aspects, examining the human, environmental, and governance dimensions of mineral extraction in the DRC and its impact on local communities and ecosystems. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of mineral-based conflicts in the DRC and the efforts needed to address them effectively.

3.1 Mineral Extraction as human and environmental crisis in the DRC

There is no doubt that the DRC has serious environmental and human rights issues related to mineral mining. Several issues, such as armed conflict, violations of human rights, environmental deterioration, and difficulties with government, contribute to these crises. Key elements of the environmental and human health emergencies connected to mining extraction in the DRC are as follows: The armed conflict in the DRC has been linked to the extraction and trade of minerals, also known as conflict minerals. These activities have resulted in violations of human rights, such as forced labour, child labour, sexual violence, and community displacement due to the frequent taking of land for exploration and extraction. Moreover, miners, particularly those engaged in artisanal mining, frequently work in hazardous conditions with little protection (Mazalto, 2009).

Mineral extraction is the process of extracting precious minerals or resources from the Earth's crust. Metals (such as gold, copper, and iron), non-metals (such as salt and gravel), and energy resources (such as coal and oil) are examples of minerals. Mineral extraction is a key business since these resources are required for a variety of economic activities such as manufacturing, construction, and energy production. Mining and extraction techniques can be highly intrusive and have a significant influence on local ecosystems and communities (Hartwick, Olewiler and Preuss, 1986). Mineral resources play a fundamental role in developing a nation. How significant such a role will be, depends upon the overall economy, as expressed by its own domestic industrial production and innovation capacity, its consumer demands, and, finally, its worldwide bargaining power. In countries like Brazil, Libya, and DRC, natural resources, which account for the larger part of their territories, are an asset for providing the material bases for development. However, there are environmental problems posed in developing mineral resources, specifically gold, diamond, coltan etc. (Bôasr, 1995). NoThe government of the United Kingdom is committed to sustainable development, and several of its initiatives are aimed at the quarrying industry. Environmentalists have concentrated their efforts on this business and are influencing government policy regarding aggregate quarrying (Morgan, 2000).

Matthysen and Montejano (2013) said local stakeholders in the DRC revealed how mining extraction had resumed in the eastern region in recent years. Despite some reports of armed rebels, miners experienced a comparatively higher level of security, opening the area for the entrance of thousands of miners. They identified two more causes for the increase in miners since 2012. The first reason was that strong prospects at nearby mines such as Luwowo were grabbing miners' attention. The second reason was that miners expected the Centre de négoce or trading centre to revitalise mineral trade in the area.⁷ The implementation of the Centre de négoce (trading centre) program, on the other hand, has proved difficult. Many obstacles have kept these trading centres, including Rubaya, from becoming active for several years. They also said resource restrictions, disagreements over the illegal use of private concessions by artisanal miners, and security risks arise because of the state's inability to protect transport routes between mines, trading centres, and export hubs. According to Coakley (2000), the DRC contains around 3.5 million metric tons of cobalt deposits. Minerals like cobalt and copper are important for the electrification of energy and transportation and are found in everything from electric vehicle batteries to solar panels and wind turbines. This puts the DRC at the forefront of the decarbonisation transition, with potential benefits from international investment, revenue, and job creation. However, extensive resource exploitation has serious negative repercussions, including the destruction of important ecosystems and pollution. Over the last few decades, the DRC has seen cycles of violence and natural resources are widely considered to have played a part in these cycles. Numerous studies show that mining plays a significant role in funding armed organisations. Poaching, pollution, deforestation, and soil erosion all threaten biodiversity as a result of the extraction of these resources.⁸

Wang'ombe (2018) elaborated that since its independence in 1960, the DRC has experienced only minor conflicts until 1998, when a serious civil war erupted. Under President Joseph Kasavubu's leadership, the country endured turbulence as a battle erupted between him and Patrice Lumumba, the prime minister at the time. General Joseph-Desire Mobutu organised a successful coup in 1965, and Mobutu became president. When Mobutu came to power, the Congolese hoped that the country would stabilise and that a new age would begin. However, no sooner had President Mobutu entered office than he began consolidating his power

⁷ Footnote 7 is missing

⁸ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/can-democratic-republic-congos-mineral-resources-provide-pathway-peace#:~:text=Extracting%20these%20resources%20puts%20tremendous,and%20soil%20erosion%20threatening%20biodiversity.&text=For%20more%20than%20a%20decade,environmental%20peacebuilding%20in%20the%20DRC.>

by repressing opposition, amassing a fortune, and transforming his country into a dictatorship. According to Pellilo (2012), following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the DRC endured two catastrophic civil wars, one of which resulted in the deaths of over a million Congolese. Conflict continues to erupt between various armed groups, local militias, and government troops, notably in the country's eastern region. Civil wars and ongoing civil conflict have been linked to internal displacement, human rights violations, as well as the loss of infrastructure, housing, and physical and human capital. During the civil conflicts, rebel groups assaulted mining areas, schools and hospitals, and armed groups and government troops seized capital assets. Illicit exploitation of natural resources provided the funds needed for the war effort while the war sustained opportunities for enrichment. Thus, the conflicts were, in a sense, self-financing. Moreover, the activities of these profiteering networks popularised the concept of "conflict minerals". Strikingly, the DRC war became synonymous with illicit resource exploitation as different actors pursued Amnesty International. The unofficial view in neighbouring capitals was that burdens/costs associated with military involvement in the DRC could be offset by exploiting the country's natural resources, contributing to the sustenance of a war economy (Whetho, 2014).

3.2 Non-State Stakeholders in the Mineral-based Conflicts in DRC

Militias and Armed Groups

Various armed groups and militias in the DRC have exploited the mineral trade to fund their activities. They seize control of mining areas, extort money from miners, and sell minerals on the illegal market to finance their operations. This has been one of the key drivers of conflict and violence in the country. The eastern region of the DRC is one of the most volatile areas, with various armed factions fighting for control. Previously, the presence of the regular army as part of operations against rebel groups meant their engagement in the mining sector where they applied taxes and confiscated minerals for their own benefit (Cuvelier, 2010). By performing their illegal mining activities, these FARDC (Force Armée de la République Démocratique du Congo) members, committed terrible crimes against the population, including murder, rape, assault, forced labour, and extortion (Witness, 2011). Before the suspension, some areas of the region, such as Bisie, were under the control of the FARDC, which had been incorporated by former rebel fighters active in the mining sector. The military benefited from mining activities by, for example, "taxing" the loads leaving the mine. In addition, up to five informal checkpoints were built between Bisie and Ndjingala so that soldiers could obtain their

share. The artisanal miners felt the effects of this, while their cooperative representatives – those who were supposed to defend their interests – were not present at the working site (Zingg & Hilgert 2011). Since the suspension was removed in March 2011, both the FARDC and rebel factions have alternately occupied many areas. At the beginning of 2012, the regular army (FARDC) reclaimed control of Bisie and proclaimed that the mine would be turned over to the mining police. In the same year, the United Nations report declared a general improvement in the security situation (UN GoE final report, 2012). However, according to new Global Witness research, the FARDC retains control of extraction in the mining areas and continues to levy unlawful fees on artisanal miners (Witness, 2013). Another security risk has been identified by local authorities. They are concerned that if the socioeconomic situation worsens and the ministerial restriction on the sale of minerals from Bisie remains in place, young people who have previously left armed organisations will return to ensure their survival (UN GoE midterm report, 2013).

Armed intervention is most common in the eastern region, particularly in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri. Armed interference was recorded at one-third or more of the mines visited. The Mai Simba, the two Nduma Defense of Congo factions, and the Nyatura militia are among the groups meddling in North Kivu. Raia Mutomboki and Mai Yakutumba had the most impact on South Kivu. Ituri is under attack by the *Forces de Résistance Patriotique d'Ituri* and Mai insurgents. Units of the Congolese army (FARDC) are the most frequently detected in eastern DRC (Verweijen and Wakenge, 2015).

Artisanal mining is just one of the numerous sources of funding for conflict players in eastern DRC, including roadblocks and taxation of other types of natural resources. To benefit from the artisanal mining sector, armed actors do not need direct control over mining locations. While armed actors, particularly army personnel, may not be physically present at some mines in militarised mining zones, the army often erect barricades some distance away from these mining locations. The Congolese army is present at about half of the total number of mapped roadblocks and is responsible for nearly half of all cases of mineral taxation (Stoop, Verpoorten and Van Der Windt, 2019). Armed group involvement as “presence” is one type, and whether, or not, this presence involves interference is another. Armed organisations were present in 16% of the 300 mines inspected, with the Congolese army present in 36%. Armed organisations and the national army were directly involved in 84% of the mines where they were present. Illegal taxation by armed organisations was taking place in 35 of the 131 mines that registered intervention, as was buying minerals in two, excavating for minerals in one, and forced labour in four. The Congolese army interfered in 61 mines by unlawful taxation, extracting for minerals in 12, forced labour in 9, and buying minerals in 7 (Verweijen and

Wakenge, 2015). Armed actors that rely heavily on natural resources to fund their war activities are arguably more likely to attract sadistic and opportunistic individuals who commit significant abuses against civilian populations, and it should be noted that armed organisations whose members have easy access to abundant, lootable natural resources are less likely to constrain their use of violence against civilians (Rustad, Østby, and Nordås, 2016). War in the DRC has increasingly been interpreted as a way of gaining access to natural resources and gaining control of informal commercial networks connecting the DRC to global markets. The intricacy of war economies is understated in the majority of these assessments. One issue that is sometimes overlooked is that economic exploitation systems formed by armed groups during the Congolese war tend to remain in the post-conflict context and appear to be unaffected by the peace process. Based on an examination of the case of the FARDC's non-integrated 85th Brigade, a former Mayi-Mayi militia currently operating under the FARDC banner and actively involved in mining extraction in the East region (Garrett, Sergiou, and Vlassenroot, 2009). Lack of verifiable data makes it difficult to find the location of many mine sites, establish which mines are active and which are inactive at any given time, and comprehensively verify the armed groups or other entities that are either present at mines or have access to revenue streams emanating from them. These conditions alter often and were exacerbated in 2012 by increased warfare, particularly between the Congolese armed forces and the M23 rebels. FARDC battalions and other state security personnel are stationed throughout the eastern region. According to the Group of Experts and other sources, some parts of the state security services continue to engage in extortion or control of the mineral trade (Reliefweb, 2012).

More than a hundred militias and armed organisations are engaged in the DRC's eastern area, many of which commit severe violations and atrocities that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. These groups and militias in the DRC have exploited the mineral trade to fund their activities. They seize control of mining areas, extort money from miners, and sell minerals on the illegal market to finance their operations. According to Ogunnoiki (2019), this has been a key driver of conflict and violence in the country. This research will highlight two armed groups.

The M23 Rebellion

The violent killing of nearly 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda within a few weeks in 1994 was a horrendous event. Since then, the entire region has been affected by the genocide. It is also regarded as the starting point for the M23 Rebellion. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (Front Populaire Rwandais, FPR), led

by Tutsis, stopped the genocide. The FPR swiftly seized control of the country. Fearing retaliation, over two million Hutus fled to the neighbouring (then) DRC. These included roughly 25,000-armed Hutu militia men, who were partly responsible for the genocide in Rwanda and now posed a threat to the Tutsi community in the DRC. As long-time Congolese ruler Mobutu Sese Seko supported Hutu militias, the new Rwandan FPR government sent its militias to Zaire and armed the Tutsis who lived there. During the next twelve years, the region had three terrible wars, one of which was the Hutu/Tutsi dispute in the Congo. These battles were especially severe in eastern Congo near the Rwandan border. The Congolese government fought the rebel movement Congrès National pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) from 2006 until 2009. The Rwandan government backed the CNDP, particularly in its war against the Hutu militia FDLR. Other CNDP goals included overthrowing the Congolese government and, according to local experts, realising Rwanda's economic interests in the Congo's eastern area, which is rich in mineral resources and allows mineral extraction to armed groups (Krüger, 2013). The battle concluded with the rebels abruptly surrendering after internal power disputes significantly weakened the CNDP. On 5 January 2009, the CNDP's high-ranking military leader, Bosco Ntaganda, announced the deposition of Laurent Nkunda, the party's former leader. Ntaganda proposed a truce and began talks with the Congolese government. It was decided in the ceasefire agreement between the two parties to the conflict that 6,200 CNDP rebels would be absorbed into the regular Congolese military forces or FARDC (Broache, 2014:9). Bosco Ntaganda and Sultani Makenga, both CNDP signatories, were promoted to high-ranking positions in the Congolese military. They did, however, establish a parallel system within the armed forces. In the months that followed, the former CNDP rebels were mostly used to attack Hutu militias (FDLR) in the DRC. Amani Leo was the name given to this army action. Following the ceasefire agreement, the Congolese government and the CNDP signed a peace deal on 23 March 2009 (the beginning of the M23 Rebellion), in the province capital of Goma. Unfortunately, this agreement collapsed a few months later (Koko, 2022).

Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

The FDLR is one of the main foreign armed groups operating on DRC territory. The group was founded in 2000 and has perpetrated major violations of international law, including the targeting of women and children in armed combat, illicit mineral mining, including death and maiming, sexual violence, and forced displacement. The FDLR was responsible for the deaths of 96 civilians in Busurungi, Walikale area. An NGO medical centre recorded roughly sixty cases a month of girls and women who had been raped in the southern

Lubero district of North Kivu by armed factions including the FDLR (De Koning, 2012). There are currently 8,000 to 10,000 FDLR troops in the DRC; Hutu rebels with ties to Rwanda's 1994 genocide (Shepherd, 2016).

The Transitional Government in Kinshasa, Rwanda, and the international community must work together to solve the FDLR problem once and for all. The FDLR's 31 March announcement in Rome that it intends to end military operations against Rwanda, disarm, and go back home voluntarily, on the surface, is a very significant development that would go a long way toward ending conflict in the eastern DRC. The FDLR and the Congolese Transitional Government even announced a timeframe for demobilisation and repatriation with the Rome Declaration. However, if the details are found to be objectionable by Rwanda, which was not present at the Rome summit, the effort is unlikely to proceed. There is little incentive for FDLR leaders to return to a country where some risk prosecution for their role in the 1994 genocide and others would lose their position and riches. If, like in the past, the FDLR imposes political conditions on their return to Rwanda, the initiative will fail (International Crisis Group, 2005). Many observers believe Rwanda was permitted into the DRC to deal with those responsible for the 1994 massacre in exchange for putting an end to the FDLR, which has long been a scourge in the DRC (BBC News, 2009).

Rwandan Hutus fled to neighbouring countries on the orders of genocide leaders, who feared retaliation from the Tutsi-led RPF, which controlled Rwanda after the genocide in 1994. For the nearly 1.2 million Rwandans that came into the eastern portion of the DRC, refugee camps were created along the Rwandan border (Rafti, 2006). Several elements have contributed to the FDLR's operational success. These include the presence of many Rwandan refugees in the region, the DRC's lack of efficient government and security, and the region's current high concentration of armed organisations. Furthermore, the FDLR has been able to benefit from the region's economic, and political instability, as well as a lack of access to critical services. By providing essential services like health care and education, the FDLR has been able to earn support from local populations. The rebels also benefit from the region's mineral resources and extraction, such as gold and diamonds. All these elements have allowed the FDLR to establish itself in the region and continue operations (Florquin, 2016). The FDLR has gained support in the DRC through a variety of means. Providing crucial services to local communities is one of the key ways they have gained support. This involves providing healthcare, education, and other critical services that are frequently lacking in the region. Furthermore, they have gained support using coercion and intimidation tactics such as threats and violence. This has helped them to develop a foothold in several sections of the eastern region, where locals are typically scared to challenge them. As a result, they have acquired support through economic measures, such as giving work

possibilities and access to resources, which are techniques encouraging support for the FDLR in the DRC (Holda, 2016).

Multinational Corporations

Smelser and Baltes (2001), defined a multinational corporation as, a corporate organisation with operations in more than two countries, and its organisational structure characterises foreign direct investment. Multinational programmes in the DRC are generally carried out by a combination of international organisations, NGOs, foreign governments, and local partners. Their effectiveness can vary, and challenges include coordination, security concerns, and the need to adapt to the complex and evolving situation in the DRC. Despite these challenges, these programmes play a crucial role in addressing the humanitarian, security, and developmental needs of the country (Lumun, Aduke and Edwe, 2020). Many multinational organisations and agencies are working in the DRC to provide humanitarian relief. They aid displaced people, refugees, and those afflicted by armed conflict, natural catastrophes, and disease epidemics. These programmes give crucial aid in the form of food, shelter, healthcare, and other necessities. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) is one of the world's largest and most well-known international peacekeeping missions. It aspires to keep the peace and security in the DRC, protect citizens, and promote democratic processes (Doss, 2014)

Mineral extraction is heavily influenced by multinational corporations (MNCs) in the DRC. Their participation has both beneficial and negative consequences for the country. The following are some major characteristics of MNCs' roles in mineral extraction in the DRC: MNCs frequently make significant financial investments in the mining industry of the DRC, which can lead to job creation, infrastructure development, and greater economic activity. These firms often have cutting-edge mining technologies and experience, which can improve the efficiency and safety of mining operations. MNCs can provide access to global markets, allowing the DRC to export minerals and create cash for the country. Some MNCs participate in corporate social responsibility programmes, which may include community development projects, educational initiatives, and efforts to improve living circumstances in mining areas (Zeuner, 2018). Multinational development programmes work on various fronts, including infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and poverty reduction. They support the DRC in building the foundations for sustainable economic and social development, assist in strengthening governance structures, promote the rule of law, and enhance the capacity of governmental institutions. This includes support for free and fair elections and efforts to combat

corruption (Pollet et al., 2012). In the context of health, multinational programmes target public health issues such as the control of diseases like Ebola and efforts to strengthen healthcare systems and improve access to medical services. Multinational initiatives promote education and vocational training programmes to improve literacy rates and enhance the skills and employability of the Congolese population (Mayhew and Kyamusugulwa, 2021). Programmes with an environmental focus work on conserving the DRC's unique and valuable natural resources, including its rich biodiversity and forests. Efforts often support peace and reconciliation initiatives, aiming to resolve conflicts and promote social cohesion among various ethnic and regional groups. Investment in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and energy facilities, is a key component of many multinational programmes to enhance the country's connectivity and economic development. They often involve monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, supporting efforts to protect vulnerable populations, and ensuring accountability for human rights abuses (Lumun, Aduke and Edwe, 2020).

Concerns have been raised that MNCs may exploit the DRC's mineral richness, extracting resources without offering equitable benefits to the country. In their drive for profit, MNCs may not always prioritise environmental sustainability, resulting in ecological degradation and harm to local communities. There have also been reported incidents of MNCs indirectly or directly assisting armed groups implicated in human rights violations in the DRC. This has exacerbated the strife in the region. MNCs operating in the DRC may engage in corrupt tactics such as bribing government officials or armed groups to get mining licenses and protect their operations. Some MNCs have been chastised for employing low-wage labour, especially child labour, in the mining sector. Such methods have the potential to worsen social inequality and hurt local communities, according to Whetho (2014). Profiteering networks (local and foreign businesspeople, private militias, rebel groups, and MNCs) took advantage of the country's instability in the East, where much of the DRC's natural resources are situated, to extract and trade in minerals such as diamonds, gold, and coltan (Montague, 2002). The rRassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie) rebel movement granted the Société Minière des Grands Lacs the monopoly on all coltan exports for three reasons, according to Nestor Kiyimbi, Chief of the Department for Land and Mining Affairs. Firstly, the Shenimed trading post, owned by Madame Gulamali, was thought to be the only trading post that had managed, for a considerable amount of time, to reach the minimum level of five tons of taxable coltan exports a month; secondly, the rebel authorities were not happy about the dishonest undervaluation practices of many Congolese competitors; and thirdly, they were concerned about the high rates of illegally smuggled minerals (Cuvelier and Marysse, 2003).

A considerable percentage of the DRC's mineral riches have been smuggled out of the country, frequently with the involvement of MNCs. This "resource leakage" robs the country of desperately needed revenue. It can be difficult to ensure that minerals are sourced sustainably and conflict-free because the supply chains of some MNCs might be opaque, making it impossible to identify the origin of minerals. Some of these bad qualities have been addressed through certain efforts. In the United States, for example, the Dodd-Frank Act compels corporations to trace the origin of specific minerals in their supply chains and report on their due diligence efforts to verify they are not obtaining conflict minerals. This policy has had some effect in reducing the trade in conflict minerals from the DRC (Seay, 2012). Therefore, MNCs' roles in mineral extraction in the DRC are complex, and their actions have both beneficial and negative consequences for the country. Effective regulation, transparency, and corporate accountability are required to ensure that the benefits of mineral extraction are dispersed more evenly and that the negative repercussions are minimised. Consequently, the illicit exploitation of Congolese minerals, both by armed groups and multinationals, has been, and still is, the cause of massive human rights violations (Binaki, 2018).

Civil Society and Humanitarian Agencies

Civil society is the sphere of organised, non-governmental, and non-profit organisations and associations that exist alongside the government and commercial sectors within a society. It is frequently distinguished by its independence from the government and its voluntary nature. Civil society organisations serve a variety of functions, including advocacy, social assistance, human rights, and community development, as argued by Carothers and Barndt., (1999). In the context of mineral mining in the DRC, civil society is critical. Given the DRC's huge mineral riches and the complicated issues connected with resource exploitation, CSOs in the country play an important role in campaigning for transparency, accountability, and ethical practices (Hönke, 2014). Civil society in the DRC is participating in anti-corruption measures in the mining sector. They argue for greater openness in tax collection and payment to limit the potential for graft and bribery. Additionally, they collaborate with the DRC government to advocate for improved mining regulations and practices. They may advocate for the implementation of mining-related international norms and agreements (Coghlan et al., 2006).

CSOs in the DRC strive for greater openness in the mining sector. They advocate for the release of information about mining contracts, income, and environmental impact studies. Transparency helps to ensure that mining activities benefit the country and its people. They actively supervise mining operations, noting

any infractions of rules and regulations, as well as the environmental and social repercussions. They frequently publish studies and findings that can be used to hold both mining firms and government officials responsible.⁹ CSO's improve communication between mining companies, government agencies, and local populations impacted by mining activities. They contribute to ensuring that communities have a say in decision-making and that their concerns are addressed. Many CSOs try to empower local populations to understand their rights and engage with mining companies and government officials. They educate people about topics such as land rights, environmental protection, and sustainable development. They also frequently campaign for the equitable and transparent allocation of mining proceeds, seeking to ensure that local communities and the country as a whole benefit economically from mineral resources (Musole and Rwabashi, 2023). Security policies were expanded to include social development and public relations because of local social pressure, violence, civil society's demand, and the growth of international voluntary codes. Companies are now directly the subject of people's expectations and complaints because there are no organisations in the area that would offer individuals in the community alternative sources of income and because the state neither resolves local issues nor redistributes mining proceeds. There are additional examples besides the regular violent clashes with artisanal miners. In Kolwezi, for instance, inhabitants of the former mining town took as a hostage a security manager of one of the new companies to put pressure on the company to repair the water supply of the settlement (Hönke, 2009). Civil society has a critical role in conflict prevention and settlements in areas where mining activity may lead to conflict. They resolve disagreements, foster conversation, and aid in peace-building efforts. CSOs advocate for environmentally friendly mining methods and the reduction of environmental damage. They may also advocate for land reclamation and sustainable mining techniques. Many CSOs in the DRC run public awareness campaigns and education programmes to educate the public about the effects of mining, the rights of affected people, and the significance of responsible resource extraction (Cuvelier, 2013).

The exploitation of natural resources in DRC must be followed by meticulous control, both on its traceability and the allocation of resources generated, to be a vector of sustainable development. However, the complicity between state actors and the companies involved in this exploitation significantly hinders such control. As a result, it is the activities of CSOs that enable this control and the required pressure on the relevant political and economic actors. To do so, civil society and social movements require a democratic arena in which to obtain and communicate information about resource exploitation to the public, on the one hand, and to

⁹ See Extractive Sectors Transparency Initiative (EITI), Articles of Association 2019-2021. <https://eiti.org/documents/eiti-articles-association>

increase citizen control on the other. This purpose, however, is being contested by governmental actors and MNCs, whose influence in terms of acquiring, controlling, and retaining power is undeniable today (Musole and Rwabashi, 2023). There has been tremendous international attention and continental commitment through the AU, as well as sub-regional commitment through the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), to end the violence and mining war in the DRC. The UN has sent its most expensive peacekeeping operation to the DRC. Its mandate has been amended throughout time to strengthen this force's ability to protect civilians. Various actors have also made efforts to promote peace in the DRC. CSO's continue to strive at the grassroots level to change the roots and culture of violence, but vicious cycles of cruelty remain alarmingly common. This situation needs a deeper investigation of why peace remains elusive (Ahere, 2012).

3.3 Government Efforts to manage mineral extraction and associated conflicts

The DRC has been working on various government attempts to manage mineral extraction and accompanying conflicts. However, the hurdles are enormous due to the country's vast natural wealth, a history of conflict, corruption, and inadequate governance mechanisms (Radley and Vogel, 2015). The Congolese government took part in the diamond trade, and a process to restrict the legal trading of conflict diamonds was established. In 2003, 12 years after the study, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 55/56, which implemented the recommendations of the Fowler study and established the Kimberley Process Ratification System. The Fowler Report (2000) exposed the Angolan UNITA - União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) movement's involvement in the blood diamond trade. The certification system is an industrial self-regulation mechanism that solely governs the rough diamond market to prevent the blood diamond trade, which fueled civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. The agreement includes all importing and exporting countries participating in the rough diamond trade, including the DRC as an exporter. The DRC has created mining laws and regulations, including the Mining Code of 2002. This legislative framework establishes guidelines for mineral discovery, exploitation, and exportation. Changes to the code have been recommended to increase transparency and revenue for the state. The DRC Mining Code of 2002 was a key piece of legislation governing the country's mining sector. It is vital to remember that later adjustments or changes to the code may have occurred since then. The Mining Code of 2002 was enacted to regulate and promote the

exploration, extraction, and processing of mineral resources in the DRC. Its principal goal was to attract international investment and boost mining sector development (André-Dumont, 2007).

The Mining Code of 2022 established mining operators' rights and obligations, including provisions concerning mineral resource ownership and exploration. It specified the procedures for acquiring exploration and exploitation permits, and it set the fiscal framework for the mining sector, including mining activity taxation. It outlined the royalties, taxes, and other financial duties that mining corporations were required to meet. The DRC participates in certification schemes such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for diamonds and the ICGLR certification mechanism for conflict-free minerals. This demonstrates that minerals are obtained responsibly (Verbruggen, Francq and Cuvelier, 2011). The government has taken initiatives to increase transparency in the mining sector. This includes implementing the EITI, a global standard for transparency in the extractive sectors. Diemel (2018) noted that changes to improve natural resource governance are beginning to show and that encouraged steps to guarantee that mining activities benefit local populations. Revenue-sharing agreements, infrastructural development, and social projects in mining areas are examples of these endeavours. This involves attempts to eradicate corruption, promote accountability, and strengthen the capacity of regulatory bodies. With the help of international partners, the government has taken steps to retake control of conflict-affected areas. This is critical in lowering the impact of armed organisations engaging in illicit mining. The government has been involved in peace and conflict resolution efforts, particularly in mineral-rich regions. Hanai (2021) said that negotiations with armed groups and reconciliation attempts are aimed at bringing stability to these areas. The security sector reform is an ongoing effort aimed at reducing the role of security officers in illegal mining and human rights violations. In addition, steps have been taken to lessen the environmental impact of mining operations. Land reclamation and sustainability efforts have been supported by the government (Clément, 2009).

The code includes rules for environmental protection and social responsibility. Mining companies were obligated to follow specific environmental regulations and contribute to the development of local communities. It featured provisions encouraging local people and companies to become involved in mining activities. This was done to ensure that the benefits of mining reached the local level, avoiding conflict. The Mining Code establishes artisanal mining zones (AMZs) where artisanal miners with a permit (*carte de creuseur*) can legally work. However, despite significant progress in recent years in establishing AMZs across the DRC, they do not exist in parts of the eastern DRC, and access to such AMZs is sometimes difficult, because

miners are often unaware of their existence. As a result, artisanal miners are still working illegally, primarily in industrial exploration and mining concessions (Koning, 2011).

The Congolese Ministry of Mines announced in September 2010 President Kabila's decision to halt all mining and exports from the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Maniema Eastern Regions) until further notice. The restriction, according to the statement, is designed to put an end to the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC's Eastern Regions. Several commentators questioned the mining ban's efficacy. Verbruggen, Francq and Cuvelier (2011) believe that Congolese governmental organisations monitoring the embargo lacked the requisite capacity and commitment to prevent minerals from unlawfully exiting the country. There is evidence that members of the Congolese military took advantage of the climate of uncertainty and confusion to establish and oversee illegal mining enterprises. The Mining Code also oversees the issuing of authorisations to dealers and trading houses dealing in artisanal mining products. Article 27 states that "government employees and civil servants, magistrates, members of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Security Services, and employees of public entities authorized to carry out mining activities" may not hold artisanal mining permits or trading permits, but they may invest capital in mining ventures. Enforcing such sections of the law has been problematic in many places of eastern DRC. The mining restriction had severe implications for the living standards in the eastern region. Farmers supplying the mining areas with food supplies also saw their profits drop because of the decreasing level of demand among the artisanal mining community. Furthermore, the mining restriction indirectly contributed to a decline in the availability of hard money, as mineral exports had been by far the most important source of exchange in this region of the DRC until then (Verbruggen, Francq and Cuvelier, 2011).

Despite these efforts from the government, key challenges persist in managing mineral extraction and associated conflicts in the DRC, which can be addressed:

Corruption has been a continuous issue in the DRC, with serious consequences for natural resource governance, notably the mining sector. Officials may take bribes from companies seeking mining licenses or looking to avoid compliance with regulations and there have been reports of fraudulent contracts and licenses being given, allowing corporations to exploit mineral resources without following necessary rules (Kodi, , Handy and van Vuuren, 2008:36). Corruption impairs the efficiency of regulatory structures established to oversee the mining sector. Titeca and Edmond (2019) argue that this lack of openness hinders accountability and makes it harder to track whether corporations are following legislation. Revenue leakage damages the investment climate by deterring foreign investors who might be worried about the lack of transparency and

the possibility of engaging in corrupt practices. It also robs the government of cash that could be utilised for infrastructure development and public services (Price, 2021). Local populations frequently suffer the most from the negative social and environmental effects that result from corrupted mining regulations not being successfully executed. If they don't get the benefits promised, they can be displaced, face pollution, and other negative consequences. Furthermore, social unrest can result from corruption since it weakens public confidence in government agencies and gives communities the impression that mining operations are not carried out in their best interests (Katz-Lavigne, 2020).

Through national initiatives including anti-corruption laws and the creation of anti-corruption authorities, the DRC has attempted to combat corruption. Donor nations and international organisations have supported the DRC's anti-corruption activities. But difficulties still exist, and progress has been sluggish. Anderson (2016) noted that the impact of special interests, insufficient resources, and weak institutions all make it difficult to enforce anti-corruption laws. This makes it challenging to hold businesses and people accountable for unethical behaviour. Therefore, it will take a comprehensive and ongoing effort to combat corruption in the DRC's mining industry. Institutions must be strengthened, transparency must be increased, civil society must be involved, and an accountability-focused culture must be promoted. To tackle the systemic issues caused by corruption in the governance of the mining industry, international collaboration and backing for anti-corruption campaigns are essential.

Human rights violations are frequently linked to the existence of armed organisations in mining areas. Forced labour, child labour, and aggression against local communities fall under this category. Threats, extortion, and exploitation are possible for locals and miners. Stable governance systems are difficult to construct and uphold in an atmosphere of instability and insecurity brought about by armed groups. Collaborating with dishonest officials in the DRC and adjacent countries might impede attempts to uphold mining legislation and safeguard the rights of local communities, thereby aiding the illicit mineral trade. Winston (2003) suggests that the mining industry's attempts to enforce regulations and fight corruption are weakened by this coordination. The existence of armed factions impedes attempts to advance ethical mining methods. It could be difficult for businesses in these sectors to carry out due diligence to make sure conflict minerals are not present in their supply chains. The topic of DRC conflict minerals has drawn worldwide attention. Companies are required to disclose information regarding the use of conflict minerals in their products by initiatives like the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act in the United States. Therefore, larger peacebuilding programmes in the DRC are entwined with efforts to address the issues posed by armed

groups in mining districts. A holistic strategy that tackles the underlying causes of conflict and fosters good governance is needed to find sustainable solutions.(Congress, U.S., 2010). It should be understood that it will take a thorough and well-coordinated effort including national and international parties to address the problem of armed groups in DRC mining areas. This involves encouraging ethical mining methods that put the welfare of nearby communities and the sustainable use of natural resources first, as well as battling corruption, upholding laws, and supporting peace and stability.

In the DRC, land rights and ownership disputes over mining regions present a complicated and multidimensional problem with legal, social, and economic facets, land rights can be held under a variety of statutory, customary, and community arrangements. Several groups may have unique customs and conceptions of land ownership. Formal legal frameworks for land ownership frequently diverge from the unofficial, customary systems that local people acknowledge and the granting of mining concessions by the government may overlap with existing land rights and traditional land use. This disparity may exacerbate uncertainties and conflicts around property rights. (Geenen, 2014:91) the DRC's legal safeguards for customary land rights may be insufficient or ineffectively implemented. As a result, nearby populations may be at risk of being uprooted or taken advantage of by mining firms. People who live in, or close to, mineral-rich areas, are frequently uprooted by mining operations. Tensions and conflicts may arise because of inadequate compensation, plans for resettlement, or community involvement (Katz-Lavigne, 2020). Furthermore, addressing the issue of land rights and disputes over ownership of mining areas in the DRC requires a comprehensive approach that involves legal reforms, community empowerment, corporate responsibility, and good governance practices. Sustainable solutions should prioritise the rights and well-being of local communities while promoting responsible and transparent management of mineral resources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the conflict surrounding mineral extraction in the DRC is a complex and multifaceted issue that goes beyond governance challenges. While poor government oversight and weak regulations play a significant role, the presence of militias, armed groups, and MNCs further complicates the situation. These actors exploit the mineral wealth of the DRC for their gain, perpetuating violence and instability in the region. Addressing the conflict in the DRC requires a holistic approach that considers the economic, political, social, and environmental dimensions of the issue. While humanitarian organisations, non-governmental organisations, moralists, and negotiators play important roles in advocating for peace and justice, their efforts alone are not enough. The complexity of the conflict demands a more nuanced and comprehensive approach.

This is where the church can play a crucial role. With its pastoral care and eco-theological perspective, the church can offer a unique contribution to peacebuilding efforts in the eastern part of the DRC. By providing spiritual support, moral guidance, and ethical leadership, the church can help communities affected by the conflict to heal, reconcile, and rebuild. Additionally, the church's eco-theological perspective can raise awareness about the environmental impact of mineral extraction and advocate for sustainable and responsible mining practices. This dissertation has less to do with pastoral counselling or pastoral therapy, however, and more with the mutual care between the environment or society. Chapter 4 and 5 will elaborate this aspect further..

CHAPTER 4:

ECC AND THE HUMAN/ ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN THE DRC

Introduction

The DRC stands at the crossroads of human suffering and environmental degradation, with mineral extraction playing a central role in the complex crisis gripping the nation. Among the myriad actors involved, the church, and specifically the ECC, hold a unique position and potential for impactful intervention. This chapter explores the intersection of mineral extraction, the human and environmental crisis in the DRC, and the compelling reasons why the church, including the ECC, has both a stake and an invitation to be actively involved in addressing these pressing issues.

The ECC, as a significant religious body in the DRC, embodies a moral and ethical voice deeply rooted in the fabric of Congolese society. Its teachings and principles emphasise compassion, justice, and stewardship of the environment, aligning closely with the core values needed to address the human and environmental crisis fueled by mineral extraction. The ECC's extensive network of churches and congregations across the country positions it as a vital grassroots force capable of mobilising communities and effecting change at the local level. Furthermore, the ECC's historical involvement in social justice issues, including advocacy for peace, human rights, and sustainable development, underscores its relevance and responsibility in responding to the crisis in the DRC. The church's presence in areas affected by mineral extraction provides a unique vantage point to witness the impact on local communities firsthand and to offer pastoral care and support to those affected.

Additionally, the ECC's engagement with international ecumenical organisations and partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies provide avenues for amplifying its voice and influence on a broader scale. By leveraging these connections, the ECC can advocate for policy changes, promote transparency and accountability in the mining sector, and support initiatives that address the root causes of the crisis.

4.1 ECC's Ecclesial Response to the conflicts from mineral extraction

According to Reliefweb's official webpage (published 5 March 2003), ECC advocates for justice and peace regularly. It uses moral authority to demand an end to conflicts involving the extraction of minerals, urging

relevant parties to seek just and peaceful resolutions, and it participates in peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas through the implementation of certain projects or programmes, such as promoting peace and reconciliation. This shows that the ECC actively participates in efforts to mediate and resolve conflicts. It entails encouraging communication between parties involved in conflict, encouraging reconciliation, and supporting peacebuilding efforts. Nevertheless, the ECC is asking for humanitarian assistance from the Church Together International (ACT) as well as training for fourteen members of the ECC from the eastern region, in disaster management and readiness, and training in the values of ACT and the Code of Good Conduct.¹⁰

In an Editorial article from Reliefweb (11 Aug 1999), it states that in the ECC's efforts to support ethical and appropriate mining methods, the church teamed together with other religious organisations. Additionally, the ECC promotes the use of ecologically friendly procedures, human rights compliance, and ethical standards by businesses engaged in mineral extraction. The ECC interacts with the neighbourhood to learn about its needs and problems. This entails encouraging local populations to speak out against mineral extraction decisions and standing up for their rights. This took place in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation Department of World Service (LWF/WS). According to LWF-ECC there is a pressing need to address the humanitarian catastrophe and the displaced people resulting from the ongoing violence in Ituri. Nonetheless, to precisely identify the needs of the impacted community, an urgent evaluation had to be conducted first. Through their member churches that are engaged in these locations, LWF and ECC will jointly implement the assessment and through this process enhance the capability of ECC staff to conduct emergency assessments. Together with providing for the needs in Ituri, LWF-ECC plans to address the needs in Kisangani and Tshopo using extra feeding programmes, projects to multiply seeds for food security, school renovation, peace, and reconciliation, ECC capacity building, and emergency preparedness¹¹.

According to Mubiala (2021), religious institutions often have international networks. The ECC engaged with international organisations, NGOs, and other churches to seek support, share information, and coordinate efforts to address conflicts and humanitarian justice. Seizing the opportunity, three civil society organisations namely, Trial International, the Club des Amis du Droit du Congo (CAD-Congo), and the Consortium des Organisations de la Société Civile pour la Justice Transitionnelle (led by two significant religious umbrella

¹⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/act-appeal-dr-congo-relief-rehabilitation-afdc31>

¹¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/drc-emergency-relief>

groups). These two groups, the Église du Christ au Congo and the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo, or CENCO) organised a roundtable to discuss and examine the best practices for a transitional justice process in the DRC, taking into account the unique characteristics of the nation. This roundtable, which was held in Kinshasa on 26-27 January 2021, gave international academics and specialists, bilateral and multilateral partners, and all Congolese players involved in the field of technical and humanitarian justice in the DRC, the chance to come together (Mubiala, 2021). The most significant recent transitional justice initiatives in the DRC are the proposed creation of a Provincial Truth, Justice and Reconciliation commission, the draft governmental decrees on the establishment of a Reparations Fund for Victims of Mass Crimes (hereinafter, Reparations Fund) and a National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (NTJRC). The Congolese government started working on two decrees in 2020 that called for the creation of a new commission for truth and reconciliation as well as a fund to compensate victims of mass crimes. The proposed national commission would be tasked, rationalised, and materialised with a wide-ranging mission that includes the following: investigating serious human rights violations; preventing and managing intercommunity conflicts through mechanisms like community mediation to foster reconciliation; providing responses to the trauma caused by the aforementioned violations; identifying the victims of these violations; eradicating tribalism, intolerance, exclusion, and all other forms of hate; aiding in the healing process between the perpetrators and victims of human rights violations; and suggesting guarantees of non-recurrence measures. This is stated in Article 2 of the draft decree establishing the NTJRC (Mubiala, 2021).

According to Ueland (2015), the initiative of pacification was started in November 2006 by ECC through the local churches. The church felt compelled to take action to aid in the pacification, or peacebuilding in the area due to the ongoing violence there. The church witnessed several illegal mines, pain, and suffering imposed on the local population, particularly on women and children, as well as continued instability that was negatively affecting the villagers' residents. The Church cannot accept that our women are raped and that the people live in insecurity, the ECC declared. Demobilising the armed groups will remove the need for other military units to remain active in the area, allowing peace and stability to return. The initiative is an attempt to make the local population's quality of life better in every aspect of their existence. This effort was backed by the Pentecostal Foreign Mission of Norway, and the program was funded through May 2013 with assistance from the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). There is a department within MFA dedicated to peace and reconciliation activities. Every year, numerous projects aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation receive support from this department. According to Ueland (2015) the programme has received support from the beginning until 2014, but the MFA is currently evaluating it more thoroughly to decide whether or not work

should continue. The broad discussion is supported by the conflict transformation theory, which recognises that the nation's problems with widening inequalities in security, high unemployment, and a violent culture that has far-reaching negative effects are known to the outside world. Biruli (2019) notes that the ECC put these issues forward and prioritised them in its efforts to create a creative, sustainable peace, and that the ECC uses the principles of good governance as applicable frameworks for theory and practice to help with the discussion of a modern, open theology for the social transformation of the DRC people.

The DRC, one of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) priority nations for the years 2014–2017, was officially visited by WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit in April 2014 as part of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The WCC and All Africa Council of Churches' member churches in the DRC and the ECC co-organised a two-day forum where the general secretary and the WCC delegation met with member churches and learned about the wide range of issues facing the nation. To identify corrective actions after consulting with stakeholders, the forum's final declaration specifically called for the WCC to hold "an international consultation" in Geneva that would aid in better understanding the internal and external political issues that threaten the DRC's political context. Monseigneur Milenge Mwenelwata, second vice-president of the ECC, again reaffirmed this same call for an international conference in Geneva in September 2014 during his visit to the WCC headquarters at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva. This international conference on peace and security in the DRC is thus a follow-up to the pledge made at the two-day forum in Kinshasa, April 2014, at the WCC 10th Assembly.¹² ECCs act as impartial forums for discussion between parties in conflict and encourage dialogue and compromise amongst the many factions engaged in the dispute. The ECC's religious leaders preach and teach with an emphasis on the values of forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation. These messages arrange community-based reconciliation activities, bringing together individuals and groups impacted by various conflicts, and help to shift attitudes and create an environment that is conducive to peace. Churches promote social justice by tackling issues like injustice, inequality, and violations of human rights, which are the main causes of conflict. The ECC uses its leadership influence to push for structural adjustments that support long-term peace as well as working with outside partners to harness resources and expertise in conflict resolution. Marg (2008) wrote that together with other religious groups, the ECC engage in initiatives to address the immediate needs of communities, creating goodwill and helping with the settlement of underlying concerns. People are frequently displaced in places afflicted by this conflict. Therefore, the ECC works to ensure the safe return and resettlement of displaced people by

¹² <https://www.oikoumene.org/events/peace-and-security-in-the-drc>

supporting and advocating for their rights. It was a smart move for the ECC to participate in interfaith discussions to identify a useful method for resolving conflicts and to work with religious leaders from various faiths to advance harmony and understanding. They inspire moral leadership among political and societal leaders by using their moral influence. More responsible and accountable governance may result from this. Labda (2011) argued that these gatherings brought together the nation's elite political figures from the East encouraging companies involved in mineral extraction to uphold human rights, follow ethical norms, and adopt environmentally sustainable processes are some of the ways that the Church advocates for moral and responsible mining activities. The ECC engages with them to comprehend the needs and concerns of the local communities. In addition, communities should be given the ability to speak out on matters about mineral extraction, defend their rights, and educate themselves and the public at large about the moral, ethical, and social ramifications of this practice Whetho (2006).

According to Tresor Losale's 2023 interviewed by Radio Okapi, he said after much consultation among its leadership, the ECC decided to support the Basilwamba community in the Kailo territory (Maniema), by obtaining a ruling which granted a free and perpetual logging concession to the local community, to avoid conflict. A guest of Radio Okapi, the program manager within the ECC in this corner of the country, Trésor Losale, indicates that obtaining this space will contribute to improving the living conditions of these communities. He also indicates that this forest will improve social cohesion in the Basilwamba group. Trésor Losale encourages the populations in this area to develop a good management plan for this forest for them to truly benefit from it. These communities will also benefit from the support of CARITAS Congo in sustainable agricultural activities to allow them to develop with their resources (Radio Okapi, 2023) .

According to the Politico website (2023)¹³ the supreme body of the ECC, the National Synod, convened for its 19th ordinary and elective session from August 6–13, 2023, with the topic “The Awakening of the Church in a Society in Crisis.” The delegates examined the sociopolitical climate of the DRC. They expressed concern regarding the conflict and Rwandan aggression under the guise of the M23, and the insecurity brought on by other unruly armed organisations that have unfairly been foisted on the Congolese in the eastern region. In a statement issued by Rev. André Gédéon Bokundoa, National President: “The ECC requests that the government take all reasonable steps to effectively negotiate the state of siege to attain the outcomes resulting in light of this contradictory scenario”. Meanwhile, she urges all Congolese to stay active in

¹³ <https://www.politico.cd/actualite/encontinu/2023/08/14/evaluation-de-letat-de-siege-lecc-exhorte-le-gouvernement-a-tout-mettre-en-oeuvre-pour-reussir-la-table-ronde.html/137988/>

defending the country's territorial integrity and against any attempts to divide it. To put an end to this, the committee and the national president of the ECC, Rev. André Gédéon Bokundoa, challenge the international community, including the UN Security Council, the European Union, the Union African, sub-regional organisations, and other friendly states, to take serious action against those who commit mass crimes and conflicts against innocent and peaceful populations. We make a forceful plea to all Congolese to recognise the obstacles in the way of achieving our shared vision. We keep in mind that we are the ones who will write our history and determine our fate. They declared, "Let us awaken as one human race and rise above ignorance, self-interest, nepotism, tribalism, hatred, division, the banality of evil, corruption, murder, and mass crimes" (Politico, 2023). The ECC typically represents the only social institution that offers genuine peace to victims of violence after years of horrific conflict in the Eastern region. The ECC is also aware that many of the members of the Church have also experienced trauma and loss as a result of fleeing their homes in search of safety after escaping confrontations. As a crucial player in fostering peace and reconciliation, the ECC stands for unity and healing in the face of unimaginable adversity. The 53rd regular session of the ECC declared:

We, the members of the National Executive Committee of the ECC, assembled for the 53rd ordinary session in compliance with Article 17 of the ECC Constitution, from Monday, February 19 to Thursday, February 22, 2018, formulate the following recommendations: to the president of the republic, to ensure the security of people and their property throughout the territory. Restoring justice and human dignity in the DRC is a constant battle for the ECC, one of the most organised organisations. The Eastern DRC's judicial system continues to be under scrutiny by the International Criminal Court of Justice due to the high number of killings there. War, illegal mining, and intense social unrest have defined the DRC (Defap, 2018).

The ECC has also applauded the many stances adopted by the international community, which, , recognises Rwanda as the nation that is the source of the attacks, hostilities, and terrorist activities in the DRC. The ECC condemns the alarming crisis that is causing mass casualties, undermining the value of human life, and in particular, causing intolerable and deadly attacks on the most vulnerable populations. It also denounces the hypocritical behaviour of neighbouring countries and the guilty silence of certain international bodies that, while fueling conflict in the DRC, do nothing to stop the country's spiraling instability and degenerative logic.

Taking note of the situation that has drawn criticism, the ECC reaffirms its intention to assist the national awakening that unites and mobilises the Congolese people to stop at all costs, conflict, armed groups, and terrorist groups including the M23 from pursuing their warlike goals on national territory. It is brought to light by this church that not all Rwandans are involved in the invasion of the DRC by the Rwandan government. Because of this, she exhorts Congolese people to stop using xenophobia and hate speech directed towards Rwandans. The ECC congratulates and strongly encourages the entire Congolese population to persevere for its awakening of a collective conscience in the face of all the threats and enemies that threaten the nation, while underlining its support for the Armed Forces of the DRC in their defense of the integrity of the national territory and the preservation of the country's unity. The ECC encourages further actions, including severing diplomatic ties with the aggressor nation or its leader – a nation that derives its happiness from the blood of the Congolese after the state of the Congo took two steps to violate all agreements, protocols, and other commitments made with Rwanda (ADIAC TV, 2022). “Following the violence that left at least fifty people dead in the eastern DRC, religious leaders convened on Saturday in Goma, mentioning, noting strong dedication to the interfaith initiative for peace in North Kivu, our encouragement of the province's authorities to pursue peace and the peaceful coexistence of communities, and our call to all believers especially the populace at large to participate in the advocacy of peace.”

According to the President of the ECC, they agreed to recite a common prayer on the ecumenical feast of the Italian saint of Assisi once a week in their parishes and mosques (Africanews, 2023). The ECC commended the men of God who ventured deep into Beni's region to assess the security and conflict situation in this area after seeing conflicts and criminal activity. The delegation was headed by Bishop Muhindo Issesomo Adolphe. They travelled as far as Mbau and Oicha, where local communities congratulated them for being on the ground. Along with these events, she will also be meeting with provincial clerics, visiting the Kigonze displaced person camp in the Mudzi-Pela area to provide a medical kit to the site's mobile clinic, and sending a message of consolation to these defenceless individuals. “Since we are constrained to our level, local communities were pleased and requested them to keep pushing for peace on our behalf, since they are receptive to the hierarchy” (Politico, 2020).

4.2 ECC's Theological Response to the conflicts from mineral extraction

As a response to the conflicts around mineral extraction, the ECC's practices took a form of prophetic and ecumenical theology. According to De Wet (2014) it should be underlined that prophetic theology is a theological approach that focuses on the prophetic messages found in religious texts, particularly in the context of Abrahamic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Pieterse (2001) suggests that it involves the study and interpretation of the words and teachings of prophets, who are believed to have been chosen to convey messages, warnings, or guidance to people during times of crisis – as Desmond Tutu did in his sermons during South African apartheid period. Van Seters (1999) noted that prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are regarded as major figures whose messages often included calls for social justice, moral righteousness, and adherence to religious laws. It can be understood that the ECC used prophetic theology to ask the government to act justly when it concerns mineral resources. Since the DRC's conflict started, religious leaders in the country have suffered greatly. They haven't been immune to the kidnappings, killings, and looting that accompany the conflict, particularly in the eastern DRC (Africanews, 2019).¹⁴ Bishops have largely expressed their opinions through pastoral letters, which highlight their extremely limited ability to act. In these letters, the Congolese bishops condemn the corruption of the authorities as well as the resource exploitation that involves both domestic and foreign parties. In their February 2008 letter, "Let Us Transform Our Hearts," the bishops urged the world community to uphold and respect human values, and demanded that all unfair mining deals be revised. They seek greater transparency from the DRC government over the disclosure of the numerous trade agreements and mineral contracts about wood and other non-mineral resources. While they were still rebels, current government officials signed the majority of these agreements with some foreign firms (Mikishi, 2013). The church leadership demands that all companies engaged in forestry and mining activities show a greater commitment to upholding their social and environmental duties, such as by conserving the environment and giving workers a fair wage (Mikishi, 2013:69).

As is the case with all churches, their role in aiding communities impacted by violence is not insignificant. The ECC and Global Ministries' partners¹⁵ in the DRC have been working together to support those affected by violence from armed groups, volcanoes, and other conflicts, by offering food, shelter, medical care, and other forms of assistance. Between 2018 and 2019 twenty-four villages were affected, and almost seven thousand people had to be relocated, according to ECC-North Kivu. In the midst of the chaotic evacuation during the volcano eruption and other conflicts, they also reported that numerous children had lost contact

¹⁴ <https://www.africanews.com/2017/07/18/2-catholic-priests-kidnapped-in-eastern-dr-congo/>

¹⁵ Congo Protestant university and Community of disciples of Christ in Congo

with their parents. In a letter of solidarity, the ECC asked Global Ministries to assist with relief activities aimed at providing food security, housing for displaced people, and aiding in the reunion of missing children with their families (published Global Ministries official, Aug 11, 2021)¹⁶. The media frequently refers to North Kivu Province in the eastern DRC as a "restive" region due to the ongoing hostilities between the Congolese military and many militia groups. One of the world's biggest UN peacekeeping missions is based there. ECC has always been a supporter of peace and reconciliation, and they played a crucial role in the containment of the Ebola epidemic in 2018–2019¹⁷. The DRC's public health outreach capacity was readily applied to the prevention of COVID-19, which is currently experiencing a resurgence. As well as running a camp for refugees, the ECC has long aided those escaping violence in the DRC and persecution in Burundi (Global Ministries, 2022).

The ECC understand that acting alone is not going to be better; it also utilises Ecumenical theology, which focuses on promoting unity and cooperation among different Christian denominations or traditions. According to the WCC's official webpage (2022), Ecumenical theology encourages Christians from different traditions to work together in a common mission and service to address social, ethical, and humanitarian challenges. This collaboration may involve joint efforts in areas such as social justice, peacebuilding, environmental stewardship, and relief work. Together with other church leaders in the DRC, the ECC demands an end to the fighting, the unchecked exploitation of natural resources, and a commitment to oversee contracts related to forestry and mining. A panel of bishops and archbishops from throughout the DRC met in Kinshasa in 2007 and declared their intention to monitor resource exploitation and encourage businesses to uphold human rights. Their demands (to the government) include the verification of contracts related to mining and forestry, a shift in mindset to protect the nation from impending risks, and the anarchic exploitation of natural resources by foreign capitalists. They also express concern about the state of unrest in the country, which includes rape, intimidation, kidnappings, killings, and arbitrary detentions by the military, militias, and foreign insurgent forces. To engineer an economic renaissance for the DRC, their final call is for the formation of an Economic and Social Council, with participation from the church¹⁸. According to the bishops' panel, mining and forestry companies should also be required to adhere to wage and contract arrangements that benefit both the workers and the larger Congolese population, as well as to consider the ecological impact of their operations

¹⁶ <https://www.globalministries.org/the-church-of-christ-in-congo-eglise-du-christ-au-congo-ecc-in-north-kivu-responds-to-the-volcanic-eruption-in-goma/>

¹⁷ <https://www.globalministries.org/the-church-of-christ-in-congo-eglise-du-christ-au-congo-ecc-in-north-kivu-responds-to-the-volcanic-eruption-in-goma/>

¹⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/dr-congo-bishops-our-house-fire>

(Reliefweb, 2007). As they emphasised the critical need for peace, church leaders in the DRC applauded Pope Francis' call on international governments to put an end to mineral pillage in the nation.¹⁹ Pope Francis denounced the theft, calling it a poison of greed smearing DRC diamonds with blood. He emphasised that human life was more valuable than the resources found in nature. And he urged the people behind these acts to leave Africa and the DRC alone. The Pope's call, to "give up suffocating Africa", is extraordinary, according to the Anglican Bishop of Bukavu, who also called the visit a blessing for the DRC.²⁰ Bishop Josue Bulambo of the ECC stated that the pope's visit was essential for the country's peace, helping advocate for Congo in the international community so the country can find peace and using weapons to obtain minerals through coercion is prohibited in this century. More than anything, the DRC needs peace.

Since the early 2000s, there has been significant concern among religious leaders about the impact of extractive industries on conflicts, highlighted by the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO).²¹ Thus, the Episcopal Commission for Natural Resources (CERN) was established in 2007. In addition to teaching residents about ecological lifestyles and responsible resource management, the commission has played a significant role in CENCO's policy on natural resources. It collaborates with civil society as well as other political, governmental, and business organisations that share its goals of sustainable care of the environment. They set up natural resource observatories in dioceses to raise public awareness and record instances of human rights abuses against communities (Minani, 2022). One of the best examples of the ECC's methodical, international approach to mining is its involvement in the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Protection Act. They suggested that the law shouldn't make the regulatory process simpler for companies and that they make sure to practice it. CERN released a study in 2019 about the effect of artisanal mining on regional development²². In 2020, following the release of the report, a workshop was arranged by CERN, involving members from civic society and the government, to discuss the potential integration of artisanal mining into the mainstream. Some of the workshop's recommendations included requesting that the government ensure that these miners have access to technical support for transparency regulation and that frameworks tailored specifically to the artisanal sector be developed (Minani, 2022:45). These

¹⁹ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-01/pope-decries-conflicts-and-economic-colonialism-in-drc.html>

²⁰ <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/congolese-church-leaders-hail-pope-francis-call-for-an-end-to-mineral-plunder>

²¹ [https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2022/02/15/the-mining-industry-conflict-and-the-churchs-commitment-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/#:~:text=In%20July%202007%2C%20CENCO%20decided,for%20Natural%20Resources%20\(CERN\).](https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2022/02/15/the-mining-industry-conflict-and-the-churchs-commitment-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/#:~:text=In%20July%202007%2C%20CENCO%20decided,for%20Natural%20Resources%20(CERN).)

²² <https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2022/02/15/the-mining-industry-conflict-and-the-churchs-commitment-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

recommendations from the workshop also demonstrated the prophetic theology used by the ECC so mining extraction could be inclusive.

In the Nzibira village in the eastern region everyone in the community, from young children to the elderly, works for the mine, and local miners complained to Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) during a visit to the DRC about their current circumstances. “A few dig while others split apart in an attempt to make ends meet.” It is a difficult life for them, even if mining this metal is necessary. With overwhelming strength, the purchasers of these resources are in a strong negotiating position. They are greeted like messiahs when they arrive, at any time, in their big off-road vehicles, and yet many local miners perish from starvation in the process of trying to make a living. ACN has often brought attention to the issues facing the nation over the years, and it did so once more in the recently released Religious Freedom Report, which the pontifical organisation released on June 22 year?. As a result, ACN decided to assist the miners in building churches and housing as well as offering training programmes to increase the Church's presence in these areas where the government has neglected and abandoned them. It has been determined that the miners are unaware of the value of their labour or the fact that if they organised themselves, they might be able to stand up for their rights (ACN International, 2023). This in my view reflects the ECC, and their member organisation as drawing on both prophetic theology and ecumenical theology as they look to address the exploitative extraction of mineral resources in the DRC.

4.3. ECC's Pastoral Response to the conflicts from mineral extraction

Through the different services it provides to the community, the ECC's actions are identifiable. We identify the Christian service carried out inside the community with the name Diakonia. This Christian ministry also aims to address the underlying causes of poverty, ignorance, misery, and conflict with a strong resolve (WCC 2010). Reducing the suffering of those impacted by the conflict and war in the eastern region of the DRC that has served as the war's epicenters has been a major program of activity for the ECC since 2002. ECC member churches have helped IDPs (internally and international displaced persons) in the provinces of North Kivu, Maniema, and Orientale Provinces by providing relief and humanitarian aid. For instance, in these areas, the ECC has taken the lead in supplying food, medicine, tents, and blankets among other necessities to IDPs. The ECC's trauma counselling program has also helped Goma's IDPs, who are the victims of natural

catastrophes and displaced by war.²³ One significant area of similarity between the ECC's humanitarian assistance component, and the Roman Catholic Church's peace work, is the creation and management of nutritional support centres. From 2002 to 2004, the ECC operated three nutritional feeding centres on average in Goma and Beni (North Kivu Province), and Kisangani and Bunia (Orientale Province). The main goals of the programme were to reduce mortality, particularly in the case of newborns, and assist victims in coping with the aftermath of conflict.²⁴ Educational institution rehabilitation was another task included in the ECC's relief assistance program. Reintegrating war-displaced children into the regular educational system was thought to hasten their recovery from trauma and help them cope with violence. However, because some of the schools in the provinces of North Kivu and Orientale were destroyed during the conflict, they needed to be restored before students could enrol.²⁵ The ECC provided teaching kits to roughly two hundred teachers, and school kits to thousands of children, in addition to renovating school structures and providing desks and benches. A semblance of normalcy has been brought about in those places to a remarkable extent, thanks to the role played by the ECC in the rehabilitation of educational institutions. In the eastern region, the ECC has also taken the lead in promoting peace and harmony.

Particularly the eastern region areas have been the scene of an ongoing conflict that bled into the larger conflict in the DRC, and partially (but not entirely) merged with it. The ECC formed peace support groups in its member churches throughout the provinces to foster ethnic harmony, peace, and reconciliation. Church members participated in training programmes in negotiation and mediation, and peace support groups served as mediators in a variety of disputes. Prunier (2001) noted that their efforts as impartial panel mediators or peacemakers have aided in promoting harmony and peace in several locations, including Ituri.

Whetho (2006), observed that the North Kivu and Orientale Provinces have not been the only areas where the ECC has dedicated itself to promoting communication. It has been essential in advancing peace and national healing. The ECC Secretariat's endorsement of the Inter-Congolese dialogue's (ICD) convocation serves as one example of this. With the help of its ICD sensitisation committee, the ECC raised awareness of the crucial issues surrounding the DRC war, the objective standards for its settlement, the nationality debate, the future of the DRC, and the role that each individual plays in fostering forgiveness, peace, national reconciliation, and stability. This helped to mobilise church members for this crucial national consultation.

²³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/act-appeal-dr-congo-relief-rehabilitation-afdc31>

²⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/act-appeal-dr-congo-oriental-province-relief-rehabilitation>

²⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/act-appeal-drc-emergency-relief-afdc-42>

The ECC Secretariat held consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the weeks preceding the final leg of the ICD (April 2002) at Sun City, South Africa, because of the historical synergy between religious networks and the non-religious constituency of civil society. Since 2003, the ECC has prioritised political education over other components of the democratic transition process leading up to the 2006 general elections, following the successful completion of the ICD and the establishment of a transitional government of national unity (Whetho, 2006).

Since 2002, a major part of the ECC's peace-building mission has been human security. The employees of the ECC Secretariat believed that addressing matters of national security without giving equal weight to meeting human necessities would jeopardise (the chances of) peace and stability. The ECC wisely decided that the main recipients of its human security development effort would be vulnerable populations, including internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees, and former combatants. The decision was made in response to the awareness that if these individuals' needs were not met, they could jeopardise the peace effort. To promote long-term personal security, family support services were therefore a necessary component of ECC's human security effort. Despite lacking the resources to offer jobs to individuals affected by violence, the ECC started a large-scale initiative to guarantee food security in the Kivus and the Province of Orientale. The ECC provided internally displaced people (IDPs) with agricultural tools and seeds as part of its food security initiative.²⁶

The ECC has also supported regional initiatives to promote peace in addition to carrying out its action plan on human security. For example, in Bandundu, Goma, and Kisangani, village peace committee members participated in conflict resolution training courses that the ECC arranged in 2002 and 2003; the village peace committees have shown a strong desire to resolve conflicts in the communities that have been torn apart by ethnic violence. The ECC recognised and valued the committee members' dedication to promoting peace, but they also pointed out that one of the issues impeding their efforts was a lack of experience. Biruli (2019) wrote that to increase local capacity for conflict transformation, the ECC arranged several training programmes on conflict mapping, figuring out parties' (unspoken) fears, handling feelings, frustrations, and anxieties, and reaching an agreement. As of late 2004, a small number of local peace committee members have been incorporated into the ECC's peacebuilding initiative.

²⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/act-appeal-dr-congo-oriental-province-relief-rehabilitation>

Aembe and Jordhus-Lier (2017), remind us that, the ECC actively participated in the electoral preparations for the 2006 elections by supporting civic education initiatives throughout the east of the DRC. This was crucial in establishing the credibility of a political event among the general public because it was the first time that the majority of the Congolese nation had participated in a democratic election. Since voter registration and instruction were, therefore, a part of civic education, many Churches took on the duty of teaching their members to equip them for the role. The ECC changed its approach from short-term interventions to more medium-to-long-term peacebuilding initiatives because of the relatively successful 2006 elections. When the international community decided to disengage and Kabila's administration pushed through constitutional revisions (2011) that marginalised the opposition, ECC leaders in the Eastern region of the DRC made several strategic decisions related to future conflicts. While the Catholic Church publicly opposed the 2011 constitutional amendment, expressing reservations about the electoral process transparency, and fairness of the election results, the ECC opted to support and cooperate with the ruling party (Aembe and Jordhus-Lier, 2017). Kwaku (2010) said for diakonia to continue serving as an assistance service, a source of production and employment, income and savings, and credits supporting various programmes of the Church and local populations, it must work to establish the policy of unity to make exploitable varied natural resources still intact. Through the points above, it could be understood that, although the ECC has attempted to respond to the mineral conflict in the Eastern region of the DRC, it appears that their efforts have not been effective. This allegation is proven by the fact that mineral conflict between stockholders continues to destroy people's lives and the environment, delaying social development.

4.4. Emerging Themes of ECC Engagement with/ Response to the DRC Conflict

In this chapter, so far, an attempt has been made to analyse possible reasons for the failure of the ECC to provide pathways to resolve mineral-conflicts in the East region of the DRC. According to Evans (1995), the Church is a vital institution in the community, it does not exist on its own in the world; it exists for God's mission Vorster (2017). The Church is one of the institutions that influence people to make the right choices, allowing them to be mindful of their behaviours, and understand their goals in life. Its purpose is to effect change and transform communities through the creation of organic relationships and mutual participation, and to impact many lives through social, economic, and moral support, etc. Given the church's engagement with, and responses to, the mineral-based conflicts in the East of DRC the following points will be discussed

as theological and pastoral themes that have informed church actions in the region: Ecumenism, Diakonia, Christian Education and Environmental Ethics.

Ecumenism

Religious institutions often have a moral and social standing that allows them to facilitate dialogue among conflicting parties. In the mining sector, where disputes over resources can be intense, the ECC might engage in efforts to bring different stakeholders, including mining companies, local communities, and government authorities, to the table for dialogue. Which shows the ecumenical spirit. It refers to all Christians and the relationships Christians have with other people. In other words, it may mean all the believers in the world and their relationship with non-believers. This means that ecumenism is an idea of Christian denominations cooperating to foster tighter ties among their Churches and other Churches (Walford, 2004; Sauer, 2001; Shannon, 1967). Mostly, the term "ecumenical" is used to describe any interdenominational effort that promotes closer collaboration between Christians and their churches. According to Shannon (1967:104), ecumenism is important because it understands how the "...Church views itself about other religious bodies and to those who profess no religious faith". In the quest to bring about mining conflict resolution, unity, and peace in the East region of the DRC, the ECC focuses on ecumenism as a tool to bring different denominations together as well as political parties. Since many political parties use illicit mining, intimidation, oppression, and killing to keep power, the ECC has been an instrument of peacebuilding in Government as well as in politics. The ECC in DRC understands that to have peace in the East, working together as different denominations will provide the peace the country needs (Apuuli, 2004).

Jones (1981) relates the importance of ecumenism to the human visual system as an intricate network that produces more vision when the eye and ocular nerves work together. This means that combining both eyes produces better vision than one eye. In this regard, ecumenism is considered a vital mission of the Church in the DRC as it reflects the love of Christ through unity which every human being must strive to enhance, restore, and maintain. This is why the Church leadership in the DRC has been participating in many interfaith summits like the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa which was held in South Africa in 2002, to seek help and learn how peace can be achieved in the country. In addition, the ECC leadership in the DRC also attended the United States of America as well as the United Kingdom summits in 2012 to continue building awareness of peace in the country. The ECC, together with other Church leadership, went as far as to petition the United Nations, to end the war at the border between DRC and Rwanda. Unfortunately, the results were

negative after a short period of time because all denominations were not represented due to lack of order and lack of trust between religious leaders (Kumutumbo, 2017).

Diakonia

Thus, a crucial aspect of being a church is diakonia. "The responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people" is how the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement defines Diakonia as an expression of Christian discipleship, the "call to transformative action" is mentioned in the title of the ecumenical diakonia paper that was recently presented and considered at the WCCs' Central Committee. A commandment "given to all churches, at local and national levels, and to every Christian as an integral part of discipleship,". According to 1 Peter 2:5, everyone who is baptised is invited to be "a holy priesthood," which includes serving others, being devoted to the causes of justice and peace, and taking part in God's work of healing and reconciliation (Meijers, 2019:85).

What are the functions that the ECC have performed as subjects and participants in their own nation's history from 1960, individually or within their churches? And to what extent have churches in the DRC raised issues related to politics, economy, society, and the environment and helped provide pathways towards solutions? It is assumed that the ECC and other churches performed various noteworthy roles in their efforts to fulfil the *Missio Dei* in their nation. This point of view is supported by Banze (1998), who investigated how Christian churches affected the sociocultural life of the DRC. Banze (1998) declared in his study's conclusion that although not entirely adequate, the ECC had a significant impact on Congolese society and helped [people] progress in a variety of ways. In Matthew 28 verse 30, the Bible gives a mandate or mission from God to travel and teach everyone on earth about His kingdom, or the government of God that exists on this planet and points toward His eternal rest.

Vorster (2017b) notes that "The kingdom of God is a kingdom of love [...]." The love of God and one's fellow humans, peace, justice, reconciliation, the change of a discriminating society, the uplift [ing] of the impoverished and needy, and hope are only a few of its many facets. It is like a diamond." To put it concisely, the primary function of the ECC in this world is to proclaim the kingdom of God by words and deeds. The ECC reminds us that every one of these passages of Scripture encourage us to do good works: "Share your bread with the hungry and bring into your house the unfortunate without asylum; If you see a naked man, cover him up, and do not turn away from your fellow man" (Isaiah 58:7). Also, "The beneficent soul will be

satiated, and he who waters will himself be watered” (Prov 11:25). The work of the ECC has faced many challenges which make it difficult to succeed, including infrastructure, poor roads in the East region, killing in the area by different militias, and the lack of financial transparency.

ECC’s training members

The ECC, by asking for humanitarian assistance from the ACT, as well as for the training of some of its members for eastern region disaster management and readiness, together with the values of ACT and the Code of Good Conduct, shows the good intentions they have for communities. It reminds the world of the good example of Jesus. Jesus promised the disciples right away that He would transform them into something new: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Fishing for humans became their mission, replacing their previous vocation of capturing fish. Jesus gave them instruction at every turn about sharing with others, pointing people toward God, and helping those in need. The Holy Spirit guides a disciple through a shift in their heart from self-centeredness to others-centeredness as they grow into spiritual adults. Their motivation becomes centred on God. Jesus trained his disciples to serve and minister to others by using ordinary opportunities. The feeding of the five thousand is one instance in the Bible where we are shown Jesus' deliberate leadership. Examine John 6:1–13 and note all the occasions when Jesus assigned his disciples to serve the people. A disciple's heart changes as they grow into spiritual adults, according to the Holy Spirit: they become more motivated by God, become less self-centred and more willing to serve and lead. And he described in detail the six things Jesus performed with his followers to get them ready to serve others: As they were all together, Jesus shared new truth, modelled discipleship for them, connected them to God and each other, equipped and released them to do ministry, brought them to a place/situation where others were in need, and gave them real teaching before this point (Putman and Harrington, 2013). In the case of mineral conflict in the East region, the ECC trained its members to see the danger that communities go through so they can save them and respond to their needs. However, as said above, the work of the ECC was not effective, because they focused on training only a few members and expected them to resolve mining conflicts in many places. This small number of people were unable to bring about transparency in the mineral trade.

The ECC, for its part, was unable to be the light and salt of the earth in the meantime. Simply put, they were unable to resolve the disputes among themselves or their fellow political leaders. They also did not attempt to mediate the conflicts between politicians by promoting biblical values like love, humility, brotherhood, and

unity, which the men and women in power needed to build a country more beautiful than before. Why were the churches in the Congo unable to carry out this holy task? The majority of Congolese church leaders may not have been ready to carry out such a mission, according to one explanation for the situation. As previously articulated by Koopman, Rheeder, and Vorster, almost none of them had a clear view of the kingdom of God in all its dimensions. In the DRC today, there is a clear understanding of the need for new leadership that can take responsibility for its actions and actively seek solutions to pressing social, economic, and political problems. As Mualaba (2020) said, "Putting aside their differences in doctrine and confession, the churches in DRC as a whole must come together to fulfil their divine calling and mission: to the glory of God and for the good of His dear children in this nation, to preach, teach, and model the biblical-ethical virtues of love, forgiveness, unity, brotherhood, reconciliation, stewardship, justice, and peace."

Environmental Ethics

Palmer, McShane and Sandler (2014) defined environmental ethics as a study of ethical questions raised by human relationships with the nonhuman environment. The situation in the DRC presents a complex interplay of environmental, social, and ethical issues. The ECC, would need to consider various ethical frameworks when addressing the human and environmental crisis in the DRC.

Caldwell et al., (2008) elaborated that in order to create long-term wealth, ethical stewardship is defined as upholding obligations to stakeholders, workers, and the community. So, this perspective views humans as stewards of the environment, entrusted with its care. The ECC would need to evaluate how human actions in the DRC, such as deforestation, mining, and pollution, impact the environment and future generations. It would emphasise responsible resource management and conservation. Also, Bennett and Whitty (2018) ... stewardship ethics is a perspective that emphasises the responsibility of humans to care for and protect the environment. Furthermore, this view is often rooted in religious or ethical beliefs that see the natural world as a gift from a higher power or as having intrinsic value deserving of protection. In the context of the DRC, the ECC should approach its actions and decisions with a mindset of stewardship.

Nagle (2009) defined pollution as a narrow view limited to effects on the air, water and natural environment. However, Russell (1974) said pollution as phenomena causing deterioration in the quality of water, air, or soil may be similar in their effects to some of man's activities, but only the latter are normally subject to man's control. The ECC should address pollution issues in the DRC, such as water and air pollution from industrial activities (mining) and waste management practices. It would promote cleaner production methods, waste reduction, and pollution control measures to protect the environment and public health.

4.5. Conclusion

When deciding how best to conserve the environment and use resources in the DRC, the ECC would have to take an ethics of care approach, taking into account the relationships, interconnectedness, and well-being of all creatures. This viewpoint would stress how crucial it is to act with responsibility, empathy, and sustainability. From my examination of the ECC's engagement with the mineral-based conflicts in the DRC, it is clear that the church has had a series of different responses over recent decades. In its ecclesial response the church sought to leverage both local and international faith-based or ecumenical partnerships, while theologically the ECC have wrestled with where their focus should be. In this regard they have sought to advocate on behalf of the poor with government and multinational as the church sought to stand on the side of the poor, and it also tried to serve as moral mediator between conflicting parties. Finally, from the ECC's pastoral response to the conflicts, several key themes have emerged, namely, ecumenism, diakonia and Christian education as the leading themes. These are, of course, quite controversial, and so I have sought to look at the emerging role of climate or the environmental ethics as a theological theme. This does not feature as much in the theological thinking and pastoral practice of the ECC to date, and thus I propose to explore it more extensively in the next chapter, as well as to consider its implications for the church in the Congo.

CHAPTER 5

ECO-THEOLOGY AS PASTORAL CARE IN THE CONTEXT OF MINERAL EXTRACTION IN THE DRC

This chapter will provide an overview of the key terms and ideas involved in developing an ecological theology, or eco-theology as it will be called from now on. The primary goal of this chapter is to provide a definition of eco-theology and discuss its relationship to studies in related domains like creation and natural theology. A range of eco-theological sources will be examined to do this. Collecting diverse viewpoints from a range of contributions will let the research focus on recurring themes and concepts across a broad range of eco-theologies. Also, as the concluding chapter of my dissertation, I will outline my findings and conclusion, and suggest possible pathways for action where the church can place eco-theology at the centre of its pastoral care strategies related to the mineral-based conflicts in the DRC..

5.1 Eco-theology and the church against mineral extraction/ environmental exploitation

My first concluding point is that environmental exploitation is at the heart of the concern expressed by eco-theology, a subfield of theology that examines the theological implications of the ecological catastrophe. Numerous religious traditions, including several Christian denominations, have evolved eco-theological stances that prioritise ethical duty towards the environment and care of the Earth.. Humanity's role as stewards of creation is emphasised by the eco-theological paradigm. Instead of using the environment for personal advantage, this suggests that we must preserve and safeguard it (Drummond, 2008). Shaw underlined that people, including the Church, are a part of the created world,. Our role on earth is to be its custodians, not to govern over it. God says, "Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth," in Genesis 1:26–28. Together with the animals, the land, and the sky, God created humans to serve one another. They are all one; there is no clear division between them. Perhaps we may make a difference for future generations regarding climate change and climate justice if we can return to our first true calling as stewards of the world and all that it inhabits (Shaw, 2021:11).

My second concluding point is the idea that churches should safeguard the environment rather than use it for personal benefit. There are numerous ways that a church might support sustainable stewardship and environmental protection; informing their flocks of the value of environmental conservation is a crucial role

that churches may play. Sermons, seminars, and educational events with an ecological stewardship theme might all fall under this category. Scriptures that underline the holiness of creation and the duty of humanity to preserve the planet are frequently cited in eco-theologies. For example, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it," according to Genesis 2:15. Bruce Little said, it should be noted that creation and Creator are distinct concepts in the Christian faith (Little, 2010) . Furthermore, man is included in the concept of nature, which is another way of saying creation. According to Christian belief, man is morally accountable to his Creator because he is a rational, moral person who was created by God. When thinking about environmental stewardship, this is crucial. He is accountable to the One who established the moral standards since, as a moral person, he is capable of making decisions about what is good or evil, and what is wrong by transcendent moral principles. As a result, since God has given man stewardship over creation, man is first and foremost accountable to God in an individual sense as well as for his actions with creation itself (Gen 1:28, 2:15). This duty applies to everyone, not only religious individuals. The claim made here is that this is the basis for all environmental problems that humans have ever faced (Little, 2010). The Bible places special emphasis on the concepts of stewardship and dominion as they relate to humanity's place within the rest of creation. In both cases, the inescapable reality is that people exist in relation to the created order, first as creatures of the created order and second as stewards of the entire universe. Both responsibilities are inextricably linked. In the book of Genesis, God gives people a strong and active role. Over all other aspects of creation, humans are given authority. It also granted dominion, the right and duty to govern over creation as the special bearers of God's image. It is evident that God intended for humans to exercise dominance, even though misinterpretation of this idea has resulted in some extremely bad ideas about how humans are to relate to creation. God gives people dominion over the rest of creation to oversee and manage it (Hyneman and Shore, 2013). Therefore, the ECC's eco-theology frequently needs to highlight the interdependence of all life forms and the notion that environmental degradation impacts not just the Earth but also the welfare of human and non-human groups when it comes to mineral exploitation. The ethical use of natural resources must also be promoted by its (ECC) eco-theological viewpoints. This involves promoting sustainable practices that protect the environment and the welfare of coming generations.

Environmental Justice

Many churches, inspired by eco-theology, are actively engaged in environmental justice initiatives. This involves addressing issues of environmental racism, advocating for fair distribution of resources, and standing against practices that disproportionately harm vulnerable communities. To defend local populations' rights against manganese mining, the Catholic Church plays a significant role as an intermediary institution, voicing their interests. This indicates that the social movement that supports sustainable livelihoods as opposed to extractive-based livelihoods (extractive) must include religion and its institutions. Through a variety of tactics, such as community organising to foster self-advocacy in the communities, education to raise critical awareness, and negotiation to advance advocacy agendas, the church has been the driving force behind community empowerment. Within the dynamic movement of CSOs, the church has served as a focal point, gradually uniting many dynamic players and interests around the mobilisation of resources. Under the direction of the Diocese of Ruteng, the Church's advocacy wing, Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, fulfilled all of these functions. The changing metabolism of the economy in terms of increased flows of energy and materials is one of the causes of the growing number of ecological distribution conflicts worldwide, according to Martinez-Alier et al.(2016). Conflicts arise in the areas of waste disposal, transportation, and resource extraction. Numerous local complaints, as well as several submissions by the Environmental Justice Atlas shows that there are also numerous instances of projects being successfully halted, which attests to the presence of an international movement for environmental justice that is both rural and urban areas. This movement has created a vocabulary of ideas and catchphrases to characterise and resolve these kinds of disputes. Among other ideas, they include the following: ecological debt, climate justice, food sovereignty, land grabbing, popular epidemiology, the environmentalism of the poor and the indigenous, biopiracy, tree plantations that are not forests, and environmental racism (Martinez-Alier et al., 2016). Furthermore, ethnically-aware churches frequently take part in international initiatives aimed at mitigating climate change. Supporting laws that lower carbon emissions, educating people about climate change, and promoting environmentally friendly behaviours can all be part of this. Liturgical practices can also be influenced, with a focus on creation themes, appreciation for the resources of the Earth, and prayers for environmental healing. To ensure that all stockholders are good stewards, the Church should collaborate with nonreligious environmental organisations to work toward shared objectives of conservation, sustainable development, and the preservation of natural environments.

The DRC's churches can offer a specialised area for planning and executing environmental projects by establishing climate/ environmental care ministries or committees. These ministries can concentrate on useful initiatives like waste reduction, planting trees, community cleanups, and monitoring pollution (Bell and White, 2016). When it comes to mining and environmental exploitation, the ECC may take part in lobbying campaigns to support local, regional, and federal environmental laws. This could take the form of an Eco-Theological Commission – similar to a Truth and Reconciliation Commission – that among other things oversees the ethical management of natural resources, ecological preservation, and local communities' rights. Such a commission can provide a space for multinationals to disclose and repent past environmental sins, with a view to adopting a new covenant that protects the land, and the people from further environmental damage. In this regard, the Church can lead by example, and confess its own past failures towards reducing environmental harm. It must be instrumental in bringing environmental issues to the attention of both its members and the general public. To address the DRC's ecological problems, the value of biodiversity, and the moral issues surrounding environmental justice, workshops, seminars, or sermons may be arranged. We learn that the planet we share is a "closed system" in which the things we do to the water, land, air, trees, animals, and fish make their way back to us. Schade (2023) says we should be aware of the dynamics of reciprocity. For instance, petrochemical plastics that we use eventually find their way into our bodies through landfills and water. There, they decompose into microplastics, which fish and other animals eat, enter the food chain, and ultimately find their way into human bodies.

An ethical and ecological perspective on the consequences of mineral extraction can be seen in the convergence of eco-theology and anti-mining activism. Some eco-theological viewpoints highlight the need for responsible stewardship of the Earth and may lead to opposition against some forms of mineral extraction, even though not all churches or religious traditions have a uniform attitude on this matter. Humans are created beings, and eco-theology frequently highlights this fact. According to this viewpoint, rather than using minerals for personal gain without considering the long-term effects, humans have an obligation to take care of the planet and all of its resources. According to Mathibe (2011) Christianity and African religious systems and culture teach that God created heaven and earth, as well as all naturally occurring living things. As stated in the Bible verses listed above, "God saw that it was good." God then made humans to be the primary custodians of the entire creation. Therefore, it is important to emphasise two key points about the stewardship of creation: African perspectives and Christian ideals. God is the owner or creator of all that is lovely (or good); humans are its stewards, with the responsibility to cultivate and to keep it. (Mathibe, 2011:144). If the people to blame for neglecting the environment are Christians, according to Schade in his article "Who Is My

Neighbor in Creation" the Church may teach and enable its members to develop a Good Samaritan-style ethic of care for their local Earth-kin on the basis of Luke 10:25-37. They can then demonstrate their faith in Jesus' teachings by showing compassion to their neighbours in the environmental and human communities (Schade, 2015).

5.2 Proposed Action 1: The Church as more than custodians of God's creation

Based on Kreutter's idea, it could be understood that the term "custodianship" describes a theological or spiritual viewpoint on humanity's duty to act as stewards or guardians of the planet and its resources. The idea that people have a divinely mandated responsibility to preserve and care for the environment is frequently the foundation of this theological notion. The theology of custodianship may be interpreted differently by many religious traditions and denominations (Kreutter, 2012). Recognising that the Earth and its resources are considered a heavenly gift, created by a higher power, is frequently the first step towards becoming a custodian. This viewpoint highlights how sacred creation is. It is believed that humans are God's stewards or custodians of creation. This entails realising that all living things on Earth, including ecosystems, have been placed under human care. The ethical use of natural resources is also implied by custodianship. It is required of humans to handle resources properly, abstaining from environmental harm, pollution, and overexploitation (Hermit, 2015).

Custodianship theology frequently emphasises how intertwined all life is. The interaction between humans and the rest of creation is one example of this interconnectedness, which emphasises how decisions that impact the environment also have an impact on other living things. Justice and equity are topics covered by custodianship. A key component of responsible stewardship is making sure that all people, both current and future generations, fairly share in the advantages and disadvantages of the Earth's resources. Future-focused theology, which emphasises the value of sustainable actions that protect the planet for the next generations, is common in custodianship theology. This entails making decisions with the planet's long-term welfare in mind. It includes a duty to protect the weak, such as disadvantaged groups of people and endangered animals. To do this, environmental inequalities must be addressed and people impacted by ecological degradation must be protected (Van Dyk, 2015).

Denis Edwards (2001) elaborated that the extent and lethal harm that humans are causing to the planet's atmosphere, oceans, rivers, land, and life forms is immense. It is a catastrophe that requires every bit of

human knowledge, creativity, and dedication. The human race as a whole, including women and men of all ages, farmers, legislators, gardeners, educators, planners, scientists, engineers, artists, builders, cooks, and theologians, must come together to address this challenge (Edwards, 2001). Therefore, recognising the role of religious organisations, especially the Christian Church, in actively interacting with and contributing to the health and stewardship of the Earth is part of the idea that the Church is more than just a collection of caretakers of God's creation. A proactive and transforming role is emphasised when considering the Church as more than just custodians, even though being custodians entails a responsibility for care and preservation. Taking up a dynamic role in actively tending to God's creation entails acknowledging the Church as more than just custodians. It entails actively taking part in programmes that support environmental sustainability and wellness in addition to simply protecting what already exists (Wold, 2003). By making the dominion non-absolute, the steward metaphor modifies the lordship imagery that it depends upon. While the image of the lord focuses on a single person, the steward creates an internal sense of accountability by pointing beyond itself to a greater authority. According to this concept, God rules the entire cosmos as King and Lord. As stewards of creation for its true owner, humanity governs on behalf of God. This metaphor aims to give serious consideration to biblical verses that both seem to downplay mankind's place in the universe (e.g. Ps. 115:14–16; Eccl 1:14) and those that situate humanity high on the evolutionary scale (e.g. Ps. 8:5). So, promoting environmental justice is a prerequisite for going beyond custodianship. The Church needs to speak out against environmental injustices, such as pollution, deforestation, mining extraction and the disproportionate impact of environmental deterioration on vulnerable people, by using its moral and ethical influence. Theological teachings on environmental ethics must be integrated for the Church to be understood as more than just custodians. Investigating theological stances that highlight the interdependence of all things and the moral need to protect the environment is one way to do this.

An ever-growing part of promoting Earth Stewardship is being played by churches and other religious communities. In describing the initiative's growth and recognising the inherent tensions between the challenges and opportunities presented by the Church and religious influences, he emphasised the possibility for faiths and religious ideals to help the Church's Stewardship program. Acknowledging the complexity of religious traditions and the perspectives held by religious communities, as well as the cultural and spiritual resources that religious teachings offer in addressing change and human suffering, is crucial to inspiring religious adherents to participate in responsible stewardship of the planet. The same concepts highlight religious precepts that support the wise use of resources and significant advancements that have sparked productive discussions between ecologists and religious adherents. Lastly, partnerships between spiritual

and scientific leaders may promote cooperative Earth Stewardship (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013). The Church may actively partner with local communities on environmental efforts, instead of acting as passive stewards. This could entail tackling environmental issues that influence communities, working with neighbourhood organisations, and taking part in regional conservation initiatives. Churches must act as hubs for environmental education. This requires actively teaching congregations and communities about environmental challenges, sustainable practices, and the theological foundation for taking care of creation, going beyond custodial responsibilities. Embracing a role beyond custodianship means adopting and promoting sustainable practices. This could include energy-efficient buildings, responsible waste management, mineral extraction and ethical sourcing of materials for church activities. Acknowledging the Church as more than custodians involves active engagement in climate action. This might include advocacy for policies that address climate change, participation in climate marches, and efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of church activities. Instead of merely preserving the status quo, the Church can actively seek and implement practical solutions to environmental challenges. This might involve supporting renewable energy initiatives, participating in conservation projects, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Individuals and the place they live in may undergo profound transformations as a result of discipleship into a biblical worldview on environmental stewardship. The focus of discipleship is on understanding and applying the creation and stewardship lessons found in the Bible (Sorley, 2011:138). This information raises people's awareness of environmental issues and their duty to protect the planet. The Church must embrace a biblical worldview, promote a change in attitudes, and give the preservation and well-being of the environment more priority. More sustainable behaviours are the result of this shift in priorities, lifestyles, and personal choices (Tilley, 1987).

The Church shouldn't concentrate just on using creation to satisfy its needs. On the other hand, discipleship imparts biblically based concepts of prudent resource management. This entails conserving resources, abstaining from excessive consumption, and implementing sustainable behaviours that protect the environment. Seeing environmental stewardship as a spiritual practice changes one's outlook on land care. It gives activities a spiritual component when people view protecting the environment as a way to express their thanks and praise to God. Community involvement is a common component of discipleship. People who are taught to approach environmental stewardship from a biblical perspective are more inclined to spread these ideals throughout their communities, encouraging a group effort to protect the environment. Advocating for environmental justice might result from knowing the biblical command of justice (Sorley, 2011). Religious

adherents may develop into supporters of just and equitable resource allocation in the environment and the defence of marginalised populations. involves learning as well as education. Those who have been instructed in a biblical perspective on environmental stewardship may decide to educate others in their community and spread awareness of the value of environmental preservation. People with a feeling of purpose and agency are empowered by discipleship. People who have more authority are more inclined to advocate for sustainable practices and laws and to take an active part in the management of their local spaces (Sorley, 2011).

The Church must practice environmental stewardship, which is defined as the ethical and responsible management of the planet's ecosystems and resources, to be a good steward. It entails appreciating the environment's inherent worth, realising how intertwined all life is, and taking steps to guarantee the sustainable use and preservation of natural resources. Moral, ethical, and frequently even religious precepts serve as guidance for environmental care. Understanding that ecosystems are vital to the survival of both human and non-human life, environmental stewardship acknowledges the interconnectedness of all living things (Kipkemboi, 2017). Using natural resources sustainably to meet current needs without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their own is known as stewardship. This includes initiatives to preserve ecosystem balance, conserve biodiversity, and protect endangered species. It also involves responsible land management, which promotes actions that stop deforestation, soil erosion, and habitat degradation. In order to mitigate climate change and lessen its effects on the environment, it is also embracing renewable energy sources and pushing for a move away from fossil fuels. This includes cutting back on waste production, encouraging recycling, and implementing environmentally friendly behaviors. As an illustration, use minerals responsibly and oppose unauthorised mineral extraction (Van Dyk, 2015). Encouraging environmental justice and making sure all communities, regardless of socioeconomic level or geography, share fairly in the advantages and costs of environmental legislation are among the Church's environmental stewardship needs. And promoted by means of educational and awareness-raising initiatives to enlighten people and groups about the significance of sustainable practices and environmental preservation. Supporting and taking part in conservation efforts through lobbying, donations, or volunteer work are all part of stewardship. In order to address complicated environmental concerns, the Church as stewards must encourage collaboration between individuals, communities, governments, and non-profit groups. Many people's ethical or spiritual convictions, which stress the holiness of creation and humanity's duty to preserve it, serve as the foundation for environmental stewardship (Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts, 2009).

Earthly resources need to be managed with care and compassion, as Biblical stewardship underscores. It is based on the teachings of the Bible. Applying these values to encourage moral and sustainable practices would be a biblical stewardship approach in the context of mineral extraction in the DRC, where problems with social justice, the environment, and economic inequality are frequently linked to mining operations. Given that the Earth is a creation of God and that humans are stewards entrusted with its care, the Church must teach and emphasise creation theology. The environment's sacredness is emphasised by this foundation. Defending and advancing ethical resource management, with a focus on environmentally friendly sustainable mining techniques that protect ecosystems over the long run.

To respect the principles of justice, the Church must promote the ethical use of mineral resources, refrain from overexploitation, and make sure that the benefits are divided fairly among communities. Advocating for proper treatment of local communities affected by mining operations, particularly matters about land rights, displacement, and economic inequities, by biblical ideals of justice. Additionally, putting compassion and mercy into practice while responding to environmental disasters or humanitarian issues brought on by mining operations, providing aid and support to impacted people. Encouraging transparency and accountability in the mining sector and holding corporations accountable for their ethical business practices and social and environmental responsibilities, raising awareness of the moral implications of mineral exploitation among communities, churchgoers, and stakeholders, and incorporating Christian stewardship teachings into educational programmes. Ensuring a thorough understanding of potential ecological and social implications by supporting and pushing for rigorous environmental impact studies before the start of mining activities. It is important to support community-based development projects that go beyond the short-term financial benefits of mining, with an emphasis on sustainable development that improves communities' general quality of life and inspires hope for restoration through active participation in programmes to restore degraded lands and aid in the recovery of mining-affected ecosystems.

Based on the idea of Sands (2010) this kind of care is a deep and influential theological perspective to hold that creation as a component of the *imago dei*, or the image of God. The statement implies that the natural world has intrinsic value and worth, just like humans, since both are made in God's image. This knowledge alters our perspective on the environment and how we engage with it. It redefines stewardship as the ethical preservation of the planet as a component of God's holy order, rather than merely the responsible management of its resources. As such the following values should define the ECC's stewardship over God's earth in the DRC:

Inherent Value of Creation: Viewing creation as part of the *imago dei* implies that the natural world has inherent value and worth beyond its utility to humanity. This challenges us to recognise the intrinsic value of ecosystems, species, and natural processes, and to treat them with respect and care (Ott, 2012).

Interconnectedness of Creation: If creation is part of the *imago dei*, then it is intimately connected to humanity and to God. This highlights the interconnectedness of all life and the environment, emphasizing that our actions towards the natural world impact not just the earth, but also our relationship with God and each other (Cunningham, 2009).

Stewardship as a Sacred Duty: Understanding creation as part of God's holy order redefines stewardship as a sacred duty entrusted to humanity. It is not just about managing resources responsibly, but about caring for and protecting the earth as an expression of our gratitude and reverence towards God's creation (Berry 2006).

Environmental Protection as Worship: When we view environmental protection as part of our stewardship role, it becomes an act of worship. Protecting the earth is a way to honor and praise God, recognizing the beauty and complexity of His creation (Liederbach, 2016)

Briefly, viewing creation as part of the *imago dei* redefines stewardship as a sacred duty to protect and care for the earth. It challenges me and other members of the ECC to see environmental protection as an integral part of our faith and a way to honour God's creation. By recognising the inherent value of the natural world and our interconnectedness with it, all can strive to be better stewards of the earth and fulfil our role as caretakers of God's creation.

5.3 Proposed Action 2: Pastoral Care as care for all of God's creation

Pastoral care is traditionally understood to focus primarily on the well-being of individuals within a faith community. However, the concept of pastoral care as care for all of God's creation includes a larger and more holistic perspective. According to this enlarged definition, pastoral care includes not just a person's bodily, mental, and spiritual health but also the upkeep and stewardship of the entire created order. The foundation of pastoral care for all of God's creation is creation theology, which acknowledges the Earth and all living things as parts of God's holy and interwoven creation. Stewardship of the Earth is a part of pastoral care. It entails promoting ethical and environmentally conscious behaviors that tackle ecological issues and show

respect for the environment. Furthermore, pastoral care is firmly grounded in theological precepts that provide a comprehensive view of God's redeeming work in the world. This care is for all of God's creation, including both people and the environment (Wong, 2013). According to creation theology, everything in the cosmos is a product of God, and that God is the Creator of everything. The care of people and the environment as related facets of God's creation is encompassed within pastoral care, which is based on creation theology (Ollenburger, 1987). The theological idea known as the "Image of God" holds that all people are created in God's image, giving them intrinsic value and dignity. This idea encompasses acknowledging the divine fingerprint across creation, including the natural world or the environment (Scaer, 1977).

Genesis 1:26-28 describes the human mandate as stewardship and dominion over the Earth, which entails a duty to take care of both people and the natural environment. Therefore, pastoral care entails fostering a sense of accountable stewardship for the entirety of the created order. The universe is encompassed by God's redeeming activity and the incarnation of Christ (Colossians 1:19–20). Thus, an eco-theologically-informed pastoral care recognises that salvation includes the restoration of all of creation, including the environment. Ryan (2008) makes it abundantly evident that the theological ideology of Christian nationalism leans toward moralistic, legalistic, and extremely conditional conceptions of pastoral care, which logically act as the lens through which compassion, understanding, and consolation are perceived and applied. This results in a limited and constrictive comprehension of the Gospel and redemption in relation to ministry. In other words, conditional, exclusive, and moralistic care are the three issues that arise from the distortions associated with Christian nationalism in pastoral care. These issues inevitably lead to the traditional roles of care being highly conditional and exclusive, such as healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling of human beings with everything in the world (Ryan, 2008).

Religious traditions emphasise a covenantal relationship between God and creation, as well as between God and humans. In the care of people and the environment, pastoral care acknowledges this covenant and works to sustain it. During the Eucharistic celebration, Christians express a sense of community and connection with God, each other, and the entire creation. This is only one excellent example. The goal of pastoral care is to expand this sense of community to include environmental conservation. Gratitude for Creation and Neighbor: The entire natural community is encompassed by the ethical precept of love for neighbour, in addition to other people. Pastoral care, driven by love, welcomes a more comprehensive concept of my neighbour, which takes the environment into account (Scheib, 2014). A new eco-theological pastoral care draws from a theological anthropology that acknowledges the interdependence of all existence. Because

environmental health and human well-being are closely related, taking care of one requires taking care of the other. Pastoral care demonstrates a grateful and humble theological stance that recognises God's omnipotence over creation. This humility includes an understanding of human limits and the necessity of being grateful for creation as a gift. A theology of reconciliation that aims to restore strained bonds between people and the natural world as well as between people and each other informs pastoral care. Addressing the damage that human activity does to the environment is part of this (Thesnaar, 2010).

In eco-theological pastoral care, salvation is viewed holistically, encompassing not only individual salvation but also the whole created order's restoration and flourishing. Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si" places a strong emphasis on integrated ecology, which links social, environmental, and financial justice. Because people and the environment are interwoven parts of God's creation, pastoral care takes a holistic approach to caring for people.

For the first time in the history of the Church, Pope Francis discusses the preservation of the environment and the upkeep of our shared home. This extensive and intricate idea examines the roots of the current ecological problems, recognizing the consensus of science while providing a unique examination of the social, cultural, ethical, and spiritual aspects connected to environmental deterioration. According to the Pope, today's technocratic culture is rife with spiritual emptiness and a crisis of values, which is ultimately connected to the ecological problem. According to Tilche and Nociti's (2015) analysis, the Pope's call to action, which acknowledges the gravity and urgency of the task at hand, while also appreciating its beauty as a singular opportunity for humanity to demonstrate its capacity for action and accountability, is what distinguishes this document as especially innovative. This optimistic storyline, however, has the power to galvanise citizens and governments to take coordinated action that transcends technology solutions and instead takes into account new development models that can tackle the crisis's underlying causes (Tilche and Nociti, 2015).

The Theological Rationale for an Eco-theological pastoral care

A theological perspective on pastoral care as care for all of God's creation, including people and the environment, can be deeply rooted in Christian beliefs about stewardship, justice, and the interconnectedness of all creation in the context of the conflict in the DRC that is fueled by mineral extraction.

Stewardship: From a religious perspective, people are considered to be God's stewards, charged with taking care of and safeguarding his creation. This involves not just protecting the environment but also ensuring everyone's wellbeing, particularly for those who are disadvantaged or suffer as a result of disputes over natural resources like minerals.

The people living in the eastern DRC have endured great hardship as a result of resource-related wars, notably those involving minerals. In this context, pastoral care includes attending to the spiritual needs as well as the holistic well-being of people and communities impacted by these conflicts. It includes providing spiritual support through counselling and prayer to assist people in overcoming the psychological and emotional trauma brought on by suffering related to conflicts. It also involves providing trauma-informed care, which acknowledges the profound wounds caused by conflict and provides healing through sympathetic listening, empathy, and compassionate understanding.

Included in this are initiatives aimed at fostering unity among parties involved in resource-related disputes, whether they be separated along social, ethnic, or economic lines. In addition to supporting discussions for reconciliation amongst humans, pastoral care also involves promoting peace by participation in community-based peace-building projects. Providing possibilities for skills development and sustainable livelihoods, pastoral care encompasses programmes that empower people economically. According to Asamoah, there is an urgent need to solve the Earth's current environmental issues, which are ravaging the world and endangering its ability to support all living things as well as non-living aspects of nature, at all levels. Among other things, pollution, deforestation, land degradation, and inadequate sanitation undermine creation's health and balance (Asamoah, 2013). Pastoral leaders have the ability to offer moral and ethical guidance to their congregations, stressing the values of justice, peace, and responsible resource stewardship. They can also participate in educational initiatives to increase awareness about the ethical implications of resource exploitation, the importance of sustainable development, and the causes of conflict. Additionally, including teaching environmental stewardship principles, which emphasise the value of environmental protection and the prudent use of natural resources. For all living beings, both human and non-human, the natural environment is their primary habitat and source of sustenance. The environment provides us with the basic requirements and necessities for life, including air, water, food, shelter, and clothes. Once more, the natural world provides us with medical supplies to address the various illnesses and diseases that have plagued humanity throughout history. Employment in the mining, forestry, agricultural, quarrying, and fishing

industries is also derived from the environment. Sustainability in the environment will depend on how much appropriate care is provided for it (Asamoah (2013).

Justice: The idea of justice, which includes treating people fairly, as well as allocating resources equally, is fundamental to many Christian traditions. From a theological perspective, obtaining justice for all parties involved including local people impacted by mining operations is crucial in the context of mineral extraction, where disputes frequently result from concerns of exploitation, corruption, and unequal income distribution. According to Lynn White, the unrestricted use of nature was supported by Judeo-Christian philosophy, the Bible, the Church fathers, and contemporary science when they were all incorporated within the framework of Christian theology (Brennan, 2002). Additionally, according to Aquinas, non-human creatures are ordered for human use (Willows, 2018). Aristotle argued that non-human objects in nature only have instrumental value and that nature was created especially for humans (Glazebrook, 2003). The Church is obligated by scripture to uphold justice, sustainability, and environmental conservation Asamoah (2013).

A dedication to justice, compassion, and overall well-being is required of pastoral care in the context of nearby communities impacted by mining operations. Active listening to community members' worries and experiences is the first step. Pastoral care includes advocating for the rights of impacted populations, empowering them to exercise their rights, and working for just and equitable solutions. It is essential to comprehend their particular issues and needs to provide effective care. The environment and the welfare of people are the two things that pastoral leaders may promote and push mining firms to do. Education campaigns are used to spread knowledge about the effects of mining operations, local communities' rights, and firms' moral obligations. The provision of legal tools to communities, so they may navigate legal frameworks and pursue justice for any injustices resulting from mining operations, is an additional aspect of pastoral care. It takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to pastoral care for populations impacted by mining activity, addressing the spiritual, emotional, social, and economic aspects of their lives. Along with other stakeholders, pastors and religious leaders may be vital in advancing the well-being of these communities and fighting for justice.

Interconnectedness: The idea that human well-being is closely linked to environmental health is highlighted by numerous theological systems that emphasise the interconnection of all creation. Regarding the DRC's mineral extraction industry, this interdependence would highlight the ways in which war and environmental deterioration affect people's social and spiritual as well as physical well-being. One good example is for Tonga people. These people were located in Zambia along the Zambezi River, according to Siwila (Siwila,

2015). This group was traditionally impacted by the relocation that took place in the 1950s during the building of the Kariba dam. Significant disputes arose between the federal government and the local community as a result of the dam's construction. More than 57,000 people were forced to relocate from the lower Zambezi valley to the highlands as a result of this development, and those who refused to migrate there perished in floods when the water was released. This development contributed to a significant death toll. Other than their preference for a particular location, their resistance to relocating was attributed to several factors, including their desire to remain near their revered shrines, their ancestors' graves, and the renowned river Zambezi deity Nyami Nyami. (Kaoma, 2013). Ecologically speaking, the Tonga people are an ecologically conscious people who embody and are committed to the relationship that exists between humans and nature, according to Siwila (Siwila, 2015)

In light of environmental violations connected to mineral resources in the DRC, eco-theology provides a revolutionary framework for redefining stewardship. In keeping with the prophets' indignation at injustice against God's creation, it demands a prophetic response that extends beyond improving stewardship techniques to actively challenge and combat environmental injustices. Humans and the earth should be seen as relatives, according to Twumasi-Ankrah, Antwi, and Wiafe (2023). This means that although humans are not above nature, they are nature. As a Christian ecological model that would successfully address human attitudes toward the environment, they also support and endorse the notion of kinship (Twumasi-Ankrah, Antwi and Wiafe, 2023). Furthermore, a Prophetic call to Action needs to be made by the ECC, like the prophets who speak out against injustice, eco-theology calls for a prophetic response to environmental abuses. It demands that the ECC speak out against environmental injustices, advocate for the rights of marginalised communities impacted by mining operations, and work towards restoring God's creation to its intended state of harmony and balance. This prophetic call to action requires courage, determination, and a willingness to challenge the status quo in order to bring about meaningful change.

Eco-Theological Stewardship: Based on the idea of Ibe and Anthony, it can be understood that the concept of stewardship is redefined by eco-theology as a holy obligation to preserve and tend to all facets of God's creation, including the environment. It challenges us to see environmental protection as essential to our faith and moral obligation by highlighting the interdependence of all life and the intrinsic value of nature. According to this point of view, stewardship must undergo a fundamental transformation in our worldview, going beyond simple resource management to include a greater dedication to upholding and repairing God's established

order. They went on to say that if man looks after the earth, the earth will look after him, the sciences are not the only ones responsible for educating people about this. Church must fulfil its duty (Ibe and Anthony, 2023).

Golo stated that eco-theology envisions a world where God's created order is restored, where justice, peace, and sustainability reign Golo (2018). In the case of mineral exploitation, this vision requires the ECC to not only correct their stewardship practices but also actively work towards addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and exploitation. It should call for a transformation of hearts and minds, a reorientation of human values and priorities, and a commitment to living in harmony with God's creation.

The Biblical Rationale for an Eco-theological pastoral care

Creation as Good: God affirms the goodness of everything He has created in the Genesis 1 creation story. Nature and people are included in this. Establishing the groundwork for a theology that values and seeks the well-being of all aspects of creation, including the environment and people impacted by conflict, is this fundamental concept of creation as necessarily good.

Stewardship: Humans are entrusted with the responsibility for caring for the planet in Genesis 1:26-28. They have a duty to cultivate and tend the land, just as God does with His creation. This stewardship mandate suggests that we must manage natural resources like minerals in a way that respects God's original plan for creation and encourages the well-being of the environment and all people. Furthermore, this passage highlights humanity's unique role as stewards of God's creation. Rather than a license to exploit the earth, this stewardship mandate calls for responsible care and management of the environment, recognizing the intrinsic value of all living beings and the interconnectedness of creation.

Justice and Compassion: Justice and compassion for the weak and disadvantaged are important themes that run throughout the Bible. Scriptures like Micah 6:8 and Isaiah 1:17, which emphasise the value of acting justly, showing mercy, and walking humbly with God, demonstrate this. In other words, the importance of justice and compassion, not only towards other people but also towards the earth. It calls for a lifestyle of humility and respect for all aspects of creation, including the environment. In the context of mineral extraction-based conflict in the DRC, this biblical emphasis on justice and compassion speaks to the Church's responsibility to advocate for the rights and well-being of those affected by the conflict, including both people and the environment.

Restoration and Renewal: The Bible contains numerous promises of restoration and renewal, both for individuals and for creation as a whole. Passages like Isaiah 65:17-25 envision a future where God will make all things new, including the natural world. This hope of restoration can inspire the Church to work towards healing and reconciliation amid conflict, seeking to address not only the immediate needs but also the long-term restoration of the environment and communities impacted by mineral extraction. Furthermore, this passage speaks of God's promise of renewal and restoration, not only for humanity but for the entire created order. It inspires hope for a future where harmony and peace will be restored, including the healing of the earth from environmental degradation.

The Earth as God's Creation: The majesty and beauty of God's creation are frequently exalted in the Psalms and other poetic texts of the Bible. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." This passage emphasises the biblical idea that God owns the planet and that humans ought to treat it as good stewards by taking care of both the people who live there and the natural resources, the ownership of the earth by God, highlighting the interconnectedness of all life and the call to stewardship. It challenges us to see the environment as part of God's creation, deserving of our care and respect.

The Pastoral Rationale for an Eco-theological pastoral care

Pastoral care, as care for all of God's creation both people and the environment takes on a holistic approach that attends to the spiritual, emotional, bodily, and communal needs of individuals affected in the context of the conflict in the DRC that is fuelled by mining extraction.

Spiritual Support: Pastoral care involves providing spiritual support and guidance to individuals and communities affected by the conflict. This may include offering pastoral counselling, leading prayers for healing and peace, helping people find hope, meaning amid suffering and acknowledging the impact of environmental degradation on individuals' spiritual well-being. Help individuals find spiritual meaning and resilience in the face of ecological challenges.

Advocacy and Empowerment: The Church should engage in advocacy efforts to address the root causes of the conflict, including issues related to mineral extraction, such as exploitation, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses. Pastoral care involves empowering local communities to advocate for their rights, work towards sustainable solutions to the conflict, include environmental justice, advocating for policies and practices that protect the environment.

Environmental Stewardship: Pastoral care extends to the environment, recognizing the interconnectedness of all creation. This includes promoting environmental stewardship practices that respect God's creation and minimise harm to the environment caused by mining activities. The Church can encourage responsible resource management and advocate for environmental protection laws and regulations.

Ethical Reflection: Pastoral care involves engaging in ethical reflection on the implications of mineral extraction and its impact on communities and the environment. This may include theological discussions on issues of justice, stewardship, and the common good, helping the Church and its members discern ethical responses to the challenges posed by mining activities. By incorporating these changes, the ECC can broaden its pastoral care to include not only human victims of eco-violence but also the earth itself, recognizing the interconnectedness of all creation and the Church's role in caring for God's creation.

To shift the pastoral care programmes of the ECC to encompass a broader concern for the entire created order, including the environment, several key changes and additions can be considered:

Liturgy and Worship: Incorporate prayers, hymns, and liturgical elements that express lament and mourning for the degradation of the environment and the violation of God's creation. This can help cultivate a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards the earth within the congregation.

Liturgical Calendar: Introduce special days or seasons in the liturgical calendar dedicated to environmental awareness and action. These could include days of prayer for the environment, creation care workshops, or community clean-up events.

According to Amaru (2021), the Bible is the book of creation because it provides a detailed account of how the world and creation came into being. Since the Church is founded on the teachings of the Bible, it is important to study the Bible to understand the Church's role in creation care. The Bible's book of Genesis claims that God, the creator, created the world, heavens, and all sorts of vegetation and animals. God is claimed to have created man in His image and given authority over all of creation, including birds, trees, fish, and other living things (Genesis 1:1–25; Genesis 1:26–28). "I am giving you control over all animals, big and small, domestic and wild, including fish and birds." It is evident from a critical viewpoint that man is entrusted with the care of creation. Genesis 2:8, which states, "Then God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man He had formed," is another important passage in the creation story. In other translations, the verb planted is understood to mean cultivate. In this instance, God the creator is shown as a kind creator who spent His time creating a garden a favourable environment for humans to live in. However, Genesis 2:15

states, "Then God placed the man in the garden to cultivate it and guard it." In this passage, man is assigned the task of upholding the favourable environment and providing protection for it. In light of this, the biblical account of creation places a heavy burden on man to care for, cultivate, and protect the earth. Following the fall of man, God's instructions on how to live also encapsulate the necessity for man to take care of his surroundings and creations.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation has presented an eco-theological analysis of the ECC pastoral response to mineral resources-based conflict in the eastern region of the DRC. Through a critical examination of the environmental, social, and ethical dimensions of the conflict, this study has argued for an eco-centered pastoral approach that seeks to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace and development in the region.

The argument for an eco-centered pastoral offer represents a departure from traditional approaches to conflict in the DRC, which often focus solely on political and humanitarian dimensions. By highlighting the interconnectedness of human life and the environment, this approach offers a new lens through which to understand and respond to the complex challenges facing the region. It recognises that the destruction of the environment and the exploitation of natural resources are not just symptoms of conflict but also drivers of violence and instability.

Such thinking opens new possibilities for ECC campaigns in the DRC, as well as calls for the church internationally to stand in solidarity. By advocating for environmental justice and sustainable development, the ECC can mobilise its members and partners to address the structural injustices that underlie the conflict. This includes supporting initiatives that promote responsible mineral governance, community-led conservation efforts, and sustainable livelihoods for those affected by the conflict.

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