



USIP Partners Visit DRC Mining Site

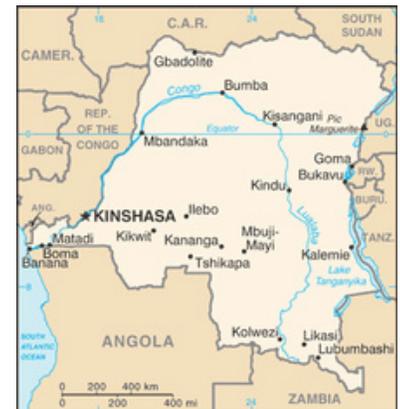
Colombian and Burmese partners of USIP visit a DRC mining site in North Kivu after a symposium where they exchanged experience and expertise with DRC counterparts. The international symposium produced concrete recommendations for how the DRC can strengthen prosecution of economic and environmental crimes.

CURRENT SITUATION

For almost two decades, the illegal exploitation of natural resources has contributed significantly to the financing of violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Both armed groups and criminal networks within the Congolese army have financially benefited from the production and trade of minerals, timber, charcoal, and wildlife. The persistent political warfare supported—and in part driven—by this commerce has led to atrocities that include gender-based violence and recruitment of child soldiers. Efforts to address these sources of conflict financing, including United Nations sanctions against the armed groups and their networks as well as U.S. legislation regarding minerals from conflict zones, have not explored the potential of bringing criminal prosecutions under Congolese and international law.

USIP'S WORK

The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) is leading an initiative, in partnership with the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, to support Congolese prosecutions of economic and environmental crimes committed in the context of armed conflict. USIP believes that bringing criminal cases will increase accountability for armed actors and the businessmen who profit with impunity from the illegal trade in natural resources. Prosecutions also are likely to strengthen the rule of law generally in the DRC and



70

ACTIVE ARMED GROUPS
IN DRC

24

TRILLION DOLLARS
VALUE OF DRC'S RAW
MINERAL DEPOSITS

5

MILLION+ DEATHS FROM
VIOLENCE AND DISEASE
DURING TWO WARS IN
1996–2007 AND AFTER

Sources: Congo Research Group, U.N.
Environment Program, International
Rescue Committee

foster greater respect for human rights. The project builds on USIP's extensive experience with encouraging justice reform and combatting crime in conflict-affected countries. USIP's recent and upcoming work includes:

International Symposium. In partnership with the Congolese Ministry of Justice and Superior Magistrates Council, USIP launched the prosecutions project in April 2016 and sought to raise public and official awareness of it through a symposium that convened senior national and international figures. In addition to examining relevant experience in the DRC, Colombia, and Burma, the discussions drew on lessons the country has learned from its progress in prosecuting human rights violations, particularly child recruitment and sexual and gender-based violence. The meeting produced concrete recommendations for how the DRC can strengthen prosecution of economic and environmental crimes.

Research on Prosecution Capabilities. In conjunction with local and international partners in North and South Kivu provinces, USIP will leverage its rule of law and peacebuilding expertise to study how the DRC can improve its relevant prosecution capabilities. Using the symposium results as a guidepost, researchers will collect more detailed information from military and civilian court officials and from civil society organizations. An additional goal is determining how to prioritize cases so they have the maximum deterrent effect.

Training and Tools. USIP and its partners will organize a series of trainings and develop resources to strengthen capabilities for prosecution. The training will take place in 2017. At the same time, the Institute will deploy two legal advisors to the Kivu provinces. They will offer technical assistance to court officials as well as to military and civilian lawyers in their investigation and prosecution of economic and environmental crimes committed in the context of armed conflict.