Since 2017, Pact has assisted 209 young artisanal miners (YAMers), from 15 to 17 years old, to thrive in alternative trades to mining. Across communities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), young boys and girls are engaged in dangerous mining activities. In Lualaba and Haut Katanga provinces, these children are primarily extracting cobalt and copper, a mineral used in virtually all batteries in common devices, including cellphones, laptops and electric vehicles. The arduous labor of mining cobalt by hand is physically ruinous for children, and the risk of accidents and even death from landslides is ever present. As work which is likely to harm the health, safety or moral wellbeing of children, children in mining constitutes one of the worst forms of child labor, and Pact is committed to ending it.

Pact implements various programs in Lualaba Province with the aim of reducing child labor in mining. These activities include community sensitization, positive parenting trainings, coordinating community stakeholders, strengthening civil society organizations, as well as our esteemed youth apprenticeship program. Pact’s activities are implemented in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders – communities; families; youth and children; schools; miners; local civil society organizations; national, provincial and local government institutions; and local and international companies.

Starting in 2017, Pact has assisted youth in the Kolwezi area to thrive in alternative livelihoods to mining, by equipping them with vocational and business skills. First, Pact analyzes the feasibility and profitability of trades within a specific community through a market study. Mentors are then identified from the selected trades, chosen based on their good character, solid professional experience, and proof they are legally established and have their own workshop in the target community. Finally, adolescent miners, from 15 to 17 years old, are selected to undergo a six-month intensive apprenticeship in a trade of their choice, and they are subsequently matched with mentors.

Of the 209 young adolescent apprentices who have graduated, 99% have left mining and embraced their alternative livelihood.

Out of 50 graduates surveyed, 98% are earning more than when they were active in the mine 16 months after graduation from their apprenticeship.

In 2020, another 230 young adolescent miners from 12 communities in Kolwezi will participate in Pact’s vocational training projects.
Upon successful completion of their six-month apprenticeships, lively graduation ceremonies are held, in the presence of the graduates’ families and mentors, key community gatekeepers, and stakeholders from government, the private sector and civil society. Each graduate apprentice is provided with a kit of equipment specific to their trade to support them to launch their enterprises. For example, the cutting and sewing apprentices receive around 40 items, including a sewing machine, electric iron, thread and needles, scissors, etc. Many of them continue to work under their supervision of their mentors, sometimes even going into business together.

« Today we are proud to stand here as useful members of society, having been given the opportunity to learn from our eminent tutors. They gave us the best of themselves, so that we can contribute to the development of our society and beloved Lualuba Province. »

- Myriam, aged 17, speaking at her graduation ceremony in October 2019, having completed an apprenticeship in hairdressing.

For More Information

Elie Abota
Project Manager
eabota@pactworld.org

Cody Ragonese
Program Specialist
cragonese@pactworld.org

Pact builds systemic solutions in partnership with local organizations, businesses, and governments that create sustainable and resilient communities where those we serve are heard, capable, and vibrant. On the ground in nearly 40 countries, Pact’s integrated adaptive approach is shaping the future of international development.