



profile

Union: Travailleurs Unis des Mines, Métallurgies, Energie, Chimie et Industries Connexes (TUMEC)

Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

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DRC is rich in cobalt, copper, gold and other minerals. About 65 per cent of the global cobalt, whose prices have spiked because of increased demand from electric car batteries and smartphones makers, is mined in DRC. However, the country's history has not made organizing easy for TUMEC as multinationals have become used to exploiting workers.

DRC is often used as an example of a country facing "a resource curse" where mineral riches fund wars and bloodshed instead of developing the country's economy and infrastructure including roads and clinics to reverse poverty.

Organizing in a country with such a past and as vast in size as DRC has not been an easy task for TUMEC, but the struggle for due diligence and responsible mining and to unionize more workers continues.

TUMEC fights to ensure that employers conform to labour practices that are agreed upon in collective agreements as protected by the law. Organizing in the mines, in energy, and chemical sectors, including workers from subcontractors and artisanal mines, TUMEC has over 12,000 members in companies that include mining multinational Glencore, and state-owned mining company Gecamines.

TUMEC - ORGANIZING AND DEFENDING CONGOLESE WORKERS' RIGHTS

IndustriALL Global Union affiliate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Travailleurs Unis des Mines, Métallurgies, Energie, Chimie et Industries Connexes (TUMEC), is committed to fighting for workers' rights, better pay, improved health and safety, and to organizing women.

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TUMEC is part of IndustriALL's Glencore campaign, aiming to enforce respect of workers at the company's operations at Mutanda and Kamoto Copper Company in Kolwezi, Lualaba province.

Through continued recruitment and organizing, it is now an established union in Kolwezi, Lubumbashi, Doko, Kisangani, Mbujimayi, Kinshasa, Lukala, Matadi and Muanda. TUMEC campaigned through union elections at workplaces, according to the labour laws. The union with the highest number of votes in the elections becomes the majority union, whilst that with less votes will be a representation union. **This year, TUMEC aims to become a majority union, which has power to negotiate with the employer.**

Much of TUMEC's work over the last years has been supported through an IndustriALL union building project funded by Dutch trade union solidarity support organization Mondiaal FNV.

In the last couple of years, leadership problems at TUMEC in Kolwezi stunted membership growth. However, after last year's congress a new leadership was elected and recruitment and organizing plans were put in place. Among other workplaces, TUMEC is targeting Mutanda and Kamoto. At Mutanda, it has only 200 members out of a permanent workforce of 6,500, and at KCC it has 175 members out of 5,800 permanent workers. The union is working hard to reverse this situation.

"TUMEC's recruitment and organizing strategy focuses on problems that workers face daily at the workplace. We then try to solve the problems in

participatory ways involving workers. We don't attract workers to the union by offering them money or clothes. Instead, they join the union because it is guaranteed that TUMEC will fight for their rights," says general secretary Didier Okonda.

In 2017, the IndustriALL DRC women's committee was set up to address issues affecting women workers in the union. The committee is organizing more women into the union and setting up women's committees at companies where TUMEC is organizing. There are plans for training workshops on rights and working conditions for women, campaigning against sexual harassment, freedom of association, health and safety, laws that affect women, and improving the understanding of gender issues.

"Hopefully the training will develop a strategy to stop violations of women's rights at workplaces in DRC and to build their participation and leadership skills," says Olga Kabalu, chairperson of the women's committee.



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1 A member of TUMEC at meeting in Kolwezi. IndustriALL

2 Representatives of TUMEC and IndustriALL in Kolwezi. IndustriALL