

## Case Studies: Children working in mines and quarries

### Peru : The accident that changed Braulio's life

Like many other children in La Rinconada, 14-year-old Braulio had worked in the mine since he was very young, carrying heavy loads of ore and as a *quimbalatero*, or stone crusher. When he was 13, he says, "One day I didn't feel well, I was very tired and fell down a few times while I was working. At the exit from the mine my barrow overturned and all the ore fell out. The captain was watching me. He kicked me hard because of this".

Braulio had heard about the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) project for the mines in Rinconada, which had been reaching out to the community through its partner organization, CARE. "I had heard about it on the radio. I decided to contact the project. They came to the mine and talked to the mine manager, and he was sanctioned. After that I only worked for one more month, helping to take care of the owner's warehouse".

The IPEC project in La Rinconada aims to strengthen and expand health, education, nutrition and other services, as well as to improve the working conditions of adult miners. Awareness-raising is also a priority. When Braulio, his brothers and their father began to attend meetings organized by the project, "We learned that working was not good for us. I had aches and pains, sometimes we didn't eat well, and it was difficult to go to school and study. Now we are in a better situation. We know more and want to move ahead and be successful in our lives".

Braulio's father now understands how important it is to offer a better future for his children. "My father was very grateful and told them that from now on only he would work, and that we could devote ourselves to school". Over 2,500 children have been helped by the IPEC/CARE project, which is working towards the progressive elimination of child labour in artisanal mines. The local community supports this goal and has increased its vigilance over child labour, to keep other children from sharing Braulio's experience in the mines.

## **Mongolia: D. Jargal rediscovers his childhood**

D. Jargal, now a 7<sup>th</sup>-grader, started work in Mongolia's gold mines in 1997 in order to supplement his family's income. "Personally I do not like to work", he says. "However, life required me to do so. It was a hard time, I had headaches and torn clothes and the family was so poor".

The informal gold mining sector in Mongolia is large and increasing, involving 20 per cent of the rural workforce. At least 10 to 15 per cent of these workers are children. The situation stems from reduced rural income opportunities, decimated livestock herds, and rising unemployment in both rural and urban areas, as well as popular expectations of high income through gold mining activities. Children in this sector work in hard rock, and half of them work with mercury to extract gold. They work underground, in water, and at blasting sites. Many of them have no access to schools or health services.

In 2004, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) began providing oversight to a comprehensive, sector-based pilot project to prevent and eliminate child labour and improve the situation of informal gold miners. One of the priorities of the project, implemented by the Mongolian Employers' Federation (MONEF), was to improve educational opportunities for working children. D. Jargal quickly learned how different life could be.

"When I worked, the food was poor and I felt sore and sick. Also there was no possibility to eat and drink with peace and comfort, I always needed to hurry. Now everything is different, I am peaceful, my body and mind are fresh and I feel everyday that I develop.

"When I worked, for the whole day I was very busy breaking rocks and panning gold. Now I do not work, I have a good time studying and playing with friends and classmates. Before going to school I did not have time to play. I worried about whether I would find any gold, and I had headaches due to the worry. Now I do not have hard thoughts, I think easily about my studying, my parents and how I enjoy playing".

As his life has changed, so have his hopes for the future. He says, "When I worked I wished I was a rich person with freedom. I dreamed about that when I worked. But now I dream about being a smart person, who can do something good for my country and the world".

## **Tanzania: David turns his life around**

David ran away from home at the age of 7. "My parents had separated. My mother was selling vegetables to earn her living. The difficult time came when there was nothing to eat at home. Then I decided to run away to Mererani".

He had heard stories about people making a lot of money in Mererani's tanzanite mines. Now 12, he talks about his disappointments. "I expected to earn my living by working in the mines, but my expectations were not met". Instead, he ended up sifting sand around the mines and earned very little. He slept on the ground outside, and when he became ill he received no treatment. "Then I happened to meet a good Samaritan who took me to his place and promised to provide for my needs. The man did what he promised and sent me to school".

David is one of dozens of children who have been assisted by the Good Hope Centre for Children and Young People in Mererani Township. This NGO is collaborating on a project with the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and the Tanzania Mining, Construction and Allied Workers Union (TAMICO). They identify working children, withdraw them from the mines, counsel them, and integrate them into schools or vocational training.

"Here I am today, a class 4 pupil," he says. "My dream is to become a pilot. Here at the Mererani Good Hope Centre, we are neither oppressed nor victimized. We are no longer involved in mine-related work. We feel honoured and see a bright future for our life."

## **Guatemala : Juan Carlos goes back to school**

At the foot of the Samala volcano near Brillantes, Retalhuleu, Guatemala, poor families earn their livelihood chipping volcanic rocks. Juan Carlos, now 17, has been doing this since he was 8 years old. The work is hard. Heavy rocks are gathered from the river, carried to shore and crushed using heavy and dangerous tools, then sold to construction companies for a very low price. Children who do this work regularly suffer bruises and insect bites, and some experience vision loss due to dust from the rocks.

Juan Carlos lives with his mother and 5 younger brothers. "I am the oldest, that's why I have to be responsible for the family", he says. In 2003, he began participating in a project of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), and its NGO partner, CEIPA, which aimed to eradicate child labour in the region. With the project's assistance, he was able to reduce his working hours and go back to school. The death of his father in 2005 made Juan Carlos head of the family, and if it hadn't been for the project's intervention, he would have been destined to work from sunrise to sunset on the shores of the river.

Instead, Juan Carlos and his brothers have been able to stay in school, and the project is helping their mother to start a business selling food in the Retalhuleu market. "My mother always said she wanted to open her own business", Juan Carlos says, "but my father wouldn't let her". The project will continue to support Juan Carlos in his future studies at the Technical Institute for Training in Guatemala, INTECAP. His teachers already say he is a promising student.