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## Side Event of the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Social Development Provides Rare Glimpse inside the Dangerous Mines that Power Our Digital World and Highlights Best Practices Empowering Democratic Republic of Congo Community to Emerge from Exploitation and Poverty.

JANUARY 26, 2016, NEW YORK – “*Maisha: A New Life Outside the Mines* – An empowered community emerging from extreme poverty,” is the subject of a side event of the 54th Session of the Commission for Social Development, which will take place on February 4, 2016, 1:15-2:45 pm EST in Conference Room 6 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of Congo to the United Nations, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, and the NGO Mining Working Group.

The side event will feature a screening of the new documentary film ***Maisha: A New Life Outside the Mines***, in which journalists/filmmakers Bernhard Warner and Luca Paradiso gained unprecedented access to the dangerous artisanal mines around Kolwezi, in the South of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Kolwezi is a rich mining area with abundant reserves of copper, cobalt and tantalum that are prized by multinational mining companies. The ore is turned into the raw components for batteries and circuitry for mobile phones, computers and power grids. The area is considered one of DRC’s stable regions. There are no warlords nor conflict mineral bans here. Still, the level of poverty and exploitation is dire. The filmmakers conducted scores of interviews with miners who recounted grim stories of abuse, exploitation, violence, poverty, disease and death. They filmed and interviewed young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers toiling in the toxic open-pit mines. The risks are high for these vulnerable groups, who work long, grueling hours in the toxic mines in order to earn a few dollars, a survival wage.

In the midst of this poverty, the story of a successful development project has emerged, where women and children have broken the cycle of abuse, violence and poverty and built a vibrant new life. The Good Shepherd Sisters and local partners built an informal school program, later expanding to a training center for young girls and a cooperative farm for ex-miners. In the film, the community shows what they have accomplished. The community’s experience illustrates a promising alternative development model that if replicated and expanded could help other communities at the bottom rung of the global supply chain to build a sustainable future. It highlights the successes of inclusive and participatory decision-making modes of engagement that uphold human rights and gender equality, provide new and diversified economic opportunities, put former girl and boy miners in classrooms, and provide food security for local communities.

Filmmaker Bernhard Warner will introduce clips of the film. Moderator Clare Nolan will invite panelists to address difference facets of the project. H.E. Ambassador Ignace Gata Mavita, Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo to the United Nations, will provide context of the situation in his country. Bhumika Muchhala from the Third World Network will critically assess the extractive development model and how it contributes to inequality and human rights violations. H.E. Ambassador David Donoghue, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and Co-facilitator of the Post-2015 Intergovernmental Negotiations will discuss the project as a best practice for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

**The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd** is a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Good Shepherd Sisters are an international congregation of women religious present in 73 countries, working to ensure the rights of people and the planet and to achieve gender equality. By advocating with women and girls, migrants and refugees, the Congregation seeks to end poverty, human trafficking and gender-based violence. For more information contact Main NGO Representative Winifred Doherty at [winifreddohertyrgs@gmail.com](mailto:winifreddohertyrgs@gmail.com) or go to <http://bit.do/Maisha-Concept-Note> and <http://bit.do/Maisha-Flyer>.

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