

Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • December 2023 • Vol. 21 • No. 12

FOCUS: This month's newsletter examines how human trafficking, child and forced labor pervade the mining of minerals used in our electronic devices.

Hidden Costs of the Mining Industry

More people are killed or injured in the mining industry than in any other industry. More than 15,000 miners are killed every year - and this is just the official number of deaths. Nobody knows how many people are injured in mining, but it is likely to be hundreds of thousands of people yearly.

Because mining often occurs in remote areas where law enforcement is weak, schools and other social services are scarce, family and community support structures may not exist, and where alcohol and drug abuse and prostitution are rampant, work in the sector can also be morally and psychologically hazardous.

Forced labor in extractive industries has been well-documented, and the link between these industries and sex trafficking is a grave concern among governments. Child labor in mines and quarries severely violates children's rights, putting children's health and safety at risk and depriving them of an education. Commercial exploitation of children for labor and sex occurs often without impunity throughout many mining areas in Africa, South America, and China.

We are all part of it.

The Western world receives large quantities of mined minerals from small-scale mining operators in developing countries.

Moreover, the US Mineral Information Institute estimates that in one year, approximately 130 million cell phones are thrown out containing around 46 tons of silver, 2100 tons of copper, and 2 tons of palladium.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

The U.S. Labor Department and the International Labor Organization consider mining one of the worst forms of child labor because of the risks of injury and death and the long-term health consequences from constant exposure to dust, toxic chemicals, and heavy manual labor.

(Pulitzer Center)

Child Labor in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mines

Child labor in mining is most often found in artisanal and small-scale mines where the children often dig with their bare hands. Artisanal miners do hazardous work for the equivalent of just a few dollars a day. Usually, small quantities of minerals are found in each site. Still, cumulatively, the amount of minerals from artisanal and small-scale mines is significant and usually added to a larger supply of industrial-mined minerals.

It is estimated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that artisanal and small-scale mining accounts for about 20 percent of the global gold supply, 80 percent of the worldwide sapphire supply, 20 percent of the global diamond supply, 26 percent of worldwide tantalum production and 25 percent of tin.

Some 40 million people work in artisanal and small-scale mines, a number the ILO states has doubled in recent years, compared with 7 million in industrial mining. More than one million of these are children. This serious

Awareness

violation of children's rights puts children's health and safety at risk and deprives them of an education.

Moreover, this results in a deterrent on the economic and social development of affected countries, as it limits the productivity of workforces for entire generations. It is also a business challenge because much of the minerals mined by children end up in global supply chains.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

There are an estimated 5 million children working in artisanal and small-scale gold mines worldwide.

(NCBI)

Health Risks of Mining to Children

Children work in mines in situations of debt bondage or trafficking in countries such as Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Working in mines puts children's health, safety, and future at risk. Children are often used for work in mines, given their small size and ability to fit into tight spaces. Children engage in various hazardous activities, from working in underground shafts, to handling mercury, to amalgamating gold with bare hands. Children are involved in the extraction, transportation, and processing stages of mining, carrying out tasks such as carrying heavy loads, crushing and grinding soil, and washing or panning gold.

Mines can lack ventilation, suffocating adults and children. Dust can cause lung diseases among children working near mineshafts, which may not appear until adulthood.

Children have died or suffered from traumatic injury from a tunnel collapse, suffocation from compressor mining, and injury from explosions. Other common physical and psychological ailments due to mining include work-related malnutrition, heat stroke, musculoskeletal injuries, and reactive airway disease. Other hazards among children because of artisanal and small-scale gold mining include neurological damage, genital and urinary disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, fatigue, immune deficiency, muscle injury, and head trauma.

There may be a latency period for specific hazards; silicosis exposure in childhood, for example, may not manifest until adulthood. As they age, they may suffer from joint and bone deformities, back injury, noise-induced hearing loss, breathing difficulties, respiratory issues from exposure to chemicals and dust, behavioral disorders, addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, stunted growth, diarrhea, and digestive disorders.

Children are also prone to suffering physical and verbal abuse, injury from beatings, sexual abuse, burns or harassment at the mining site.

Because of its inherent dangers, the International Labor Organization considers mining and quarrying as hazardous work and one of the worst forms of child labor.

Click [here](#) to learn more.





"You have to imagine walking around some of these mining areas and dialing back our clock centuries. People are working in subhuman, grinding, degrading conditions. They use pickaxes, shovels, stretches of rebar to hack and scrounge at the earth in trenches and pits and tunnels to gather cobalt and feed it up the formal supply chain."

*-Siddharth Kara,
Fellow, Harvard
T.H.Chan School of
Public Health*

Cobalt Mining

Our smartphones, computers, and electric vehicles are frequently powered by cobalt mined by workers, in many cases children and forced laborers, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which has more cobalt reserves than the rest of the world combined. Cobalt is used to manufacture almost all lithium-ion rechargeable batteries in the world today.

A usual pattern is that high-tech industrial mining companies will go to an area, cut down the trees, and devastate the landscape and homes of hundreds of low-income families living in the area. Cobalt is toxic to touch and to breathe. The air around the mines is hazy with poisonous dust, and the mining process contaminates the water.

Once the industrial company leaves, hundreds of thousands of poor Congolese people, primarily women and children, are forced by armed militias to go to the mining area and dig, often by hand, what industrial mining misses. Children as young as seven are frequently trafficked from other regions of the Congo. The money they do earn is often turned over to fund the militias. Moreover, to access more cobalt, they dig tunnels by hand, without supports or ventilation shafts. These tunnels frequently collapse, burying alive the hundreds of primarily children trapped inside.

The cobalt recovered by artisanal mining is then added to that mined by the industrial companies.

China owns most of the mining companies in the Congo and controls the supply chain from cobalt mining to lithium-ion rechargeable batteries. Lithium-ion batteries carry a label that says, "produced in China."

Other minerals used in electronics and mined in the DRC include Coltan, or columbite-tantalite, tungsten (in wolframite), and tin. Child and forced labor have also been implicated in mining these minerals.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Holding Companies Accountable

The International Rights Advocates filed a federal class action lawsuit against Apple, Tesla, Google, Microsoft, and Dell for buying cobalt for the lithium-ion batteries that power their products from mining companies in the DRC that use trafficked and forced child labor in the cobalt mines. In response to the complaint, the companies denied any responsibility for what happened in distant cobalt mines in the DRC. At the same time, the companies claim to have "strict policies" against child labor in all aspects of their supply chain.

The court held an oral argument on December 8, 2022. A victory in this case will set an important precedent that companies that knowingly support forced labor or trafficking in their distant supply chains can be held liable in a U.S. Court.

Click [here](#) to follow further updates on this case.

Gold Mining and Human Trafficking

In 2021, the Associated press met with nearly 20 Nigerian women who said they had been brought to Burkina Faso under false pretenses and forced into prostitution at mining camps.

In Secaco, a makeshift mining town in Burkina Faso tucked behind uneven dirt roads deep in the brush, trafficked women from Nigeria live and work in tiny, ragged tents with plastic sheeting. They have sex on thin mattresses on the dirt floor with 30 men a night, trying to earn their freedom.

Burkina Faso is the fastest-growing gold producer in Africa and currently the fifth largest on the continent. Gold is the nation's most important export.

More than 70% of the industrial gold mined is sent to Switzerland.

Gold from Burkina Faso is used to make products sold by companies in several industries, including the technology sector. Gold is used to produce electronic components, electroplating, and bonding wires.

While businesses involved in using this gold file security and exchange commission reports to cover human rights abuses tied to supply chains, they do not consider the trafficking of women for sex that occurs near operations that mine the gold as their responsibility since this usually takes place outside the mining areas.

Also, most documented cases of sex or labor trafficking occur in small-scale gold mines versus large industrial mines. The gold from the approximately 800 small-scale mines is usually smuggled out of the country. The government of Burkina Faso estimates the illicit market produces more than \$400 million worth of gold annually.

Human trafficking experts said abuses will continue until the mining industry, including buyers such as jewelers and electronics makers on the top of the supply chain, take responsibility for where the gold originates.

While Burkina Faso and Nigeria have signed the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, neither has finalized a joint plan to combat trafficking.

Traffickers also recruit Burkinabe children under the pretext of educational opportunities and instead exploit them as gold panners and washers in artisanal mines.

To access the entire story, please click [here](#).



Child Labor in Mining Mica

Mica is an excellent electrical insulator while being a good thermal conductor at the same time. The leading uses of mica in electrical equipment are as an insulator and as a transistor, where mica can amplify particular signals and block out others. Mica is also used in cosmetics and paints. India and Madagascar are the two largest exporters of mica globally, and both countries are known to use children to extract the mineral.

Areas where mica mines are located struggle with high poverty rates, so mining mica is often the only thing that lets families put food on the table and survive. Mica mining is unregulated and thrives in areas with weak or corrupt government leaders, so forced labor of adults and children is rampant.

Children are used in mica mining as it requires going through narrow shafts, where children find themselves in complete darkness. These shafts frequently collapse, trapping the children inside. Moreover, the laborers are constantly exposed to dust, which can lead to pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses. In addition, lacking appropriate tools, most children use their bare hands to mine mica, frequently resulting in cuts and skin infections.

In the [Report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#), the United States Department of Labor notes that young girls are also vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation around mica mining sites. The report notes that although the actual number is unknown, it is estimated that over 22,000 children work in mica mines in India and Madagascar. As with other forms of child labor in mining, mining mica instead of getting an education traps children in a never-ending cycle of abuse and suffering and limits their future employment opportunities.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Business Response

Ladan Judge recently wrote on the Importance of Addressing Human Trafficking & Forced Labor in Electronic Supply Chains for Insight, Electronic Supply Chain industry research from the Z2Data Team

Using due diligence, companies are expected to investigate and determine whether there is reasonable suspicion that forced labor or child labor contributed to the goods or services they are selling or supplying, including instances that may occur deep in the supply chain.

The electronics industry is complex, and the global supply chains run deep. Many electronic products comprise dozens or hundreds of components, each of which may be sourced from multiple suppliers in different countries.

This complexity can make it challenging for companies to identify and address risks of forced labor and other labor abuses in their supply chains. If such a reasonable suspicion exists, they must create and implement a plan of action to address their findings.

To address these issues, governments and international organizations have implemented regulations and guidelines for companies operating in the electronics industry. Some of these include:

- **US Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA):** This requires companies to disclose the steps they have taken to prevent forced labor in their supply chains and prohibits the import of goods made with forced labor.
- **The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act** in the United States requires companies to disclose their use of conflict minerals in their products and supply chains and to report on their efforts to ensure that these minerals are sourced responsibly.
- **California Transparency in Supply Chains Act:** The California Transparency in Supply Chains Act, enacted in 2012, requires companies with annual revenues of more than \$100 million doing business in California to disclose their efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking from their supply chains.
- **German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (SCDDA):** The SCDDA stipulates that companies must take remedial actions if they cause or are connected to adverse environmental or human rights impacts in their operations and supply chains.
- **UK Modern Slavery Act:** The UK government introduced the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, which requires companies with a revenue of more than £36 million to publish annual statements outlining the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.
- **EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive:** The EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive requires certain companies to disclose information on their policies, risks, and outcomes related to social, environmental, and human rights issues, including forced labor.
- **Australian Modern Slavery Act:** The Australian government introduced the Modern Slavery Act in 2018, which requires companies with an annual revenue of more than \$100 million to report on their efforts to identify and address the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

Other initiatives, such as the **Responsible Minerals Initiative**, provide tools and resources for companies to trace the origin of minerals in their supply chains and ensure that they are not contributing to human rights abuses or conflict.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has developed guidelines for responsible mineral supply chains, including due diligence processes to identify and address risks of forced labor and human rights abuses in the mining and production of raw materials.

The Electronic Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC) has also developed a code of conduct for its members that includes requirements for responsible sourcing of raw materials, fair labor practices, and respect for human rights in the supply chain.

These regulations aim to increase transparency and accountability in supply chains and encourage companies to take action to address forced labor. Companies that fail to comply with these regulations may face penalties or legal action, which can have both significant financial and reputational consequences.

For more information, please click [here](#).



Advocacy

Labor and Sex Trafficking in Venezuela Mines

A [2022 United Nations report](#) on human rights abuses in Venezuela's mining arc has found evidence of widespread sex trafficking and violence against women and children in the region. Many victims are lured to the mines with work promises and then pressured or forced into sex work. Forced labor is also prevalent. Women are most vulnerable to sex trafficking, while men are mostly captured for forced labor.

The gold-rich mining arc, where armed groups battle for control of its lucrative mines, has become a hotspot for human rights abuses. Mining operations are overseen by armed criminal groups who rule the miners with violent coercion. The mining towns are sites of brutal massacres.

The report outlines how miners are subjected to 12-hour days in pits deep in the ground. They are forced to pay up to half of their wages to the armed groups and the owners of the mining operations.

Some of the miners are as young as nine years old.

Miners face brutal attacks for any perceived noncompliance, from limb amputations to death. Victims' bodies are often dumped in abandoned mines without a proper burial.

Once lured to the region, economically vulnerable women and girls are enslaved by criminal groups who steal their documents or threaten them with violence, rape, or public shaming.

While men typically have their hands or fingers cut off for breaking the gangs' rules, the report found that women are publicly shamed. Sex workers had their hair shaved off or were publicly stripped as a form of humiliation for trying to escape.

One witness reported that she saw at least 30 women with scars around their mouths or their ears sliced off in one month. Labeled "the discarded ones," the gangs cut their faces to make them less attractive to clients.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Action

Sweat & Toil

Sweat & Toil: Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking Around the World is a comprehensive resource developed by ILAB documenting child labor and forced labor worldwide. Data and research in this app are taken from ILAB's three flagship reports: Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor; List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor; and List of Products Produced by Forced or Indentured Child Labor.

This app fits these three information-packed reports the size of a phone book in the palm of your hand. Seven things you can do with this app are:

1. Check countries' efforts to eliminate child labor;
2. Find child labor data;
3. Browse goods produced with child labor or forced labor;
4. Review laws, ratifications, and enforcement efforts;
5. See what governments can do to end child labor; and
6. Browse US Department of Labor's (USDOL) projects to combat child labor and forced labor;
7. Explore visualizations of USDOL's child labor and forced labor data!

Using this app can be a starting point to empower yourself with knowledge about child labor or forced labor worldwide. Anyone interested in these issues – including consumers – can use it as a source of information to begin asking questions, taking action, and demanding change. Today!

Download ILAB'S Comply Chain and Sweat and Toil Apps [here](#).





In Senegal, commercial sex is legal. However, research from the University of Georgia's Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) shows one in five women aged 18-30 who are engaged in commercial sex in the gold mining area of Senegal are victims of sex trafficking.

Although survivors of sex trafficking claim to be over 18, community stakeholders who were interviewed indicated that many of the women who were trafficked may be minors who claim to be 18 or older. They also explained that recruiters forge travel documents for children to make them appear to have reached the legal age for commercial sex once they arrive in Senegal.

Most women were deceived through false promises of job opportunities such as catering, hotel services, and hairdressing, which turned into a trafficking situation as they were forced to repay debts related to travel expenses. Lack of other employment was why individuals engaged in and remained in commercial sex.

To read more, please click [here](#).

Cobalt Red

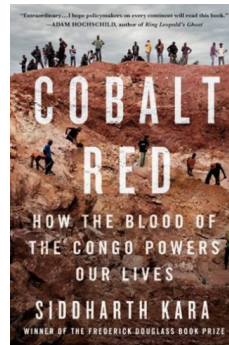
Smartphones & Electric Cars Rely on Toxic Mineral Mined in Congo by Children

The Democratic Republic of the Congo produces nearly three-quarters of the world's cobalt, essential in rechargeable batteries powering laptops, smartphones, and electric vehicles. But those who dig up the valuable mineral often work in horrific and dangerous conditions, says Siddharth Kara, an international expert on modern-day slavery and author of *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives*.

In an in-depth interview, he says the major technology companies that rely on this cobalt from DRC to make their products are turning a blind eye to the human toll and falsely claiming their supply chains are free from abuse, including widespread child labor.

"The public health catastrophe on top of the human rights violence on top of the environmental destruction is unlike anything we've ever seen in the modern context," says Kara. "The fact that it is linked to companies worth trillions and that our lives depend on this enormous violence has to be dealt with."

Click [here](#) to view this short video; you may also be interested in reading the book.



Blood Cobalt: The Congo's Dangerous and Deadly Green Energy Mines

This YouTube video exposes the shocking truth about cobalt mining, a metal crucial to making the batteries in electric cars, laptops, and mobile phones. The world's richest cobalt deposits are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the poorest countries on earth. It produces around 70% of the world's output.

This buried treasure has lured hundreds of thousands of Congolese to work in the country's mines, big and small. But mining is dangerous, corruption and violence are rife, and though child labor has been banned, it's common.

In recent years, Chinese companies that operate or finance 15 of the 19 big industrial mines have taken over the cobalt trade. Locals say that low safety standards have dropped even further under their management. School-age children handle cobalt, a toxic metal that can cause serious health effects.

Please click [here](#) to view this YouTube video, which gives a rare insight into a robust industry that operates a dangerous business with seeming impunity.

All of us use the end products.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, children working in mines say they are physically and sexually abused. They are forced to mine cobalt, a metal used to make telephones and computers. In a landmark lawsuit, a non-profit organization is accusing five of the world's largest tech companies of exploiting child labor and being complicit in the deaths of some.

Please click [here](#) to view this 3 minute YouTube video.



ALLIANCE TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Founded and Supported by U.S. Catholic Sisters

*Click on the links below to visit
the websites of our sponsors*

- [Adorers of the Blood of Christ](#)
- [Adrian Dominicans](#)
- [Benedictine Sisters of Chicago](#)
- [Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS](#)
- [Benet Hill Monastery](#)
- [Congregation of Notre Dame](#)
- [Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes](#)
- [Congregation of S. Joseph](#)
- [Daughters of Charity, Province of the West](#)
- [Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise](#)
- [Daughters of the Holy Spirit](#)
- [Dominican Sisters of Houston, TX](#)
- [Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, CA](#)
- [Dominican Sisters of Peace](#)
- [Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, CA](#)
- [Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, WI](#)
- [Dominican Sisters of Springfield, IL](#)
- [Felician Sisters of North America](#)
- [Franciscan Sisters of Peace](#)
- [Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration](#)
- [Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart](#)
- [Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters](#)
- [Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)
- [Marianites of Holy Cross](#)
- [Maryknoll Sisters](#)
- [Medical Mission Sisters](#)
- [Medical Missionaries of Mary](#)
- [Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary](#)
- [Northern California Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking](#)
- [Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters](#)
- [Presentation Sisters, Aberdeen](#)
- [Presentation Sisters, San Francisco](#)
- [Racine Dominicans](#)
- [Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary](#)
- [Religious Sisters of Charity](#)
- [School Sisters of Notre Dame, North America](#)
- [School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King](#)
- [Sisters of Bon Secours](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of Halifax](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of New York](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word - Houston](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of Nazareth](#)
- [Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill](#)
- [Sisters of Christian Charity Mendham, NJ & Wilmette, IL](#)
- [Sisters of Mercy Catherine's Residence](#)
- [Sisters of Mercy of the Americas](#)
- [Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States](#)
- [Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, USA](#)
- [Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province](#)
- [Sisters of St. Dominic - Racine, WI](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis of Colorado Springs](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis of Redwood City](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God](#)
- [Sisters of St. Francis Rochester, MN](#)
- [Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden](#)
- [Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet](#)
- [Sisters of St. Joseph of Chestnut Hill Philadelphia](#)
- [Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, USA & Canada Provinces](#)
- [Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, KS](#)
- [Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange](#)
- [Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament](#)
- [Sisters of the Divine Savior](#)
- [Sisters of the Good Shepherd](#)
- [Sisters of the Holy Cross](#)
- [Sisters of the Holy Family](#)
- [Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary](#)
- [Sisters of the Humility of Mary](#)
- [Sisters of the Precious Blood](#)
- [Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)
- [Sisters of the Sacred Hearts](#)
- [Society of the Divine Savior](#)
- [Society of the Holy Child Jesus](#)
- [Society of the Sacred Heart](#)
- [Southern CA Partners for Global Justice](#)
- [St. Mary's Institute of O'Fallon](#)
- [Tri-State Coalition Against Human Trafficking & Slavery](#)
- [U.S. Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union](#)