

Addressing Worst Forms of Child Labour in Artisanal Mining



What is the problem?

The OECD's Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains recommends that companies sourcing from conflict-affected and high-risk areas should have strong policies in place including a model supply chain policy seeking to avoid the worst forms of child labor. The internationally recognized definition of ILO Convention No. 182, which is also enshrined in national law in the countries of the Great Lakes Region, defines the worst forms of child labour as “work that is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out.” The worst forms of child labour are prohibited for anyone under the age of 18 and specifically include mining activities such as work underground, work with dangerous machinery and tools, transport of heavy loads, and work that exposes children to hazardous substances.

Child labor is a reality in some of artisanal mines of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where boys and girls aged perhaps from five years upward are engaged in an array of work in and around the mines from lower-risk, supporting work to some instances of worst forms of labor involving actual mining and mineral processing. Children work in mines for a wide variety of reasons. They are driven into the mines by poverty and their work is an essential contribution to their families' overall welfare. A complex array of drivers and factors which span social, cultural, economic, and pragmatic issues are intertwined around the phenomenon and require a sophisticated response.

Companies wishing to ensure make progress towards OECD recommendations are faced with a conundrum. Whilst they do not want to source minerals from areas where children may work, withdrawing from the supply chain and placing embargoes on mines where children operate is a blunt and damaging response which would exacerbate rather than relieve hardship.



What can be done?

Research – In 2012, with the support of the GE Foundation, Pact carried out an in-depth study to determine the drivers behind child labor in the 3Ts mines in the DRC. The results of the study formed a set of recommendations for a comprehensive, modular approach to addressing child labor at cultural, social, economic, and legal levels. This was planned as part of iTSCi's Phase 3 to add social value to the network of mines included in mineral traceability.

Field Project – In 2015, with funding from Boeing and Microsoft, the recommendations from the research study were put into action in partnership with local NGOs, Children's Voice and ARDERI, in Manono, Katanga. Two key components of proposed work were identified as critical and catalytic first steps: (1) increasing awareness of WFCL and the roles of all stakeholders in contributing to developing local solutions, and (2) strengthening the capacity of caregivers to make informed decisions about children's wellbeing.

Every month there is a meeting of the Local Monitoring Committee in Manono, established by iTSCi as a mechanism for local monitoring of iTSCi processes, resolution of incidents relating to conflict-free minerals, and engaging all local actors in dialogue and learning about due diligence and mineral traceability. The issue of child labor is now raised at every meeting. Simple, inexpensive and practical steps which local mineral suppliers can take to address child labor in their operations have been agreed. Through this, upstream and downstream actors can create a direct link on shared action and the same monitoring mechanisms are available across iTSCi areas.

What will your support do?*

US\$20,000 will sponsor a series of awareness-raising events to be organized by the local committees or children's forums.

US\$40,000 will fund a mobile phone app for child labor tracking and reporting.

US\$60,000 will pay for intensive training for upstream suppliers on child labor eradication.

US\$80,000 will provide direct support to teachers to strengthen monitoring of children's welfare and school attendance.

US\$100,000 will facilitate intensive training and follow-up with child protection services to support vulnerable children.

For More Information

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What have we achieved in 6 months (March to August 2015)?

- Creation of a Worst Forms of Child Labour coordination committee and 6 neighbourhood committees
- Positive Parenting training for 828 people
- 23 radio programs which include children as interviewees and broadcasters
- Working with the Children's Parliament, a general Children's Forum and a special Forum for orphans
- A specially written song to disseminate the message that children should not work in mines
- Mine visits for Committee Members to see the reality and understand the risks
- Collaboration with local women's network in mining areas to create a rapid alert for child labour
- 1,113 children reached to date

US\$200,000 will enable Pact to continue our existing work in the pilot area for another year.

US\$500,000 will establish a vocational training program for young people to give them life skills and options outside mining.

All of the above will enable us to continue and deepen our work in Manono, however **US\$300,000** will enable us to start up activities to reduce child labor **in one new territory**.

* pending continuation of the current project

To contribute to the iTSCi Programme's ongoing field work infrastructure, contributors should also budget for an additional US\$7,500 per year for iTSCi membership.

Pact is an international, nonprofit organization with forty years of experience. Our vision is a world where those who are poor and marginalized exercise their voice, build their own solutions, and take ownership over their future.

