Opportunities for Businesses to Promote Child Rights in Cobalt Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM)

A study by Save the Children & The Centre for Child Rights and Business

Cobalt Production in the DRC

- 70% of the world’s cobalt is produced in the DRC, of which 15–30% is produced in ASM providing work for an estimated 140,000–200,000 people.

Data on ASM shows:
- Hazardous working conditions
- Workers are exposed to harassment and violence
- Worst forms of child labour

Research methodology:
- Secondary data
- Interviews
- Participatory workshops
- Quantitative survey

7 in-depth interviews with international stakeholders
20 in-depth interviews with community-based stakeholders
8 ASM communities
10 ASM sites
207 Parent artisanal miners
209 Children from ASM communities

The Toll it Takes on Children Affected by Cobalt Mining

- Nearly 1/3 of children in our survey are not in school.
- 64% of children working in ASM sites are not in school.
- 6% of all children working by age group (includes children working in mines and other workplaces).
- 2% of children working in ASM sites by age group.
- 64% of children say they use their income for their own or their siblings’ school fees.
- 4% report a minimum of one negative emotion (stress, anger, worry) that they feel most of the time.
- 46% of children say their families cannot survive without their income.
- 2% feel pain in their bodies after a day of work.

The Responsibility of Business

- It is nearly impossible to ensure no ASM cobalt enters the more formal supply chain and ASM is crucial for the livelihoods of the local population.
- Downstream brands/buyers play an important role in improving child rights in ASM communities.

Engagement means:
- Support formalisation of ASM
- Support at-risk children in ASM communities
- Create traceable cobalt supply chain

Reduced Risks:
- Improved working conditions and improved wages
- Prevent child labour risks
- Use buying leverage

Increased Risks:
- Bad working conditions and insufficient wages
- Hidden supply chain
- No visibility on child labour / child rights in ASM
- No remediation of child labour
- Informal working environment on ASM sites
- No buying leverage

Disengagement means:
- Support formalisation of ASM
- Support at-risk children in ASM communities
- Create traceable cobalt supply chain
- Prevent child labour risks
- Use buying leverage

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