

## Commodity Report: Copper (2025)

Copper is reportedly produced with forced labor (FL) and/or child labor (CL) in the following countries:<sup>1</sup>

- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (CL)
- Serbia (FL)
- Zambia (CL)

Top ten countries that export copper worldwide:<sup>2</sup>

1. Chile
2. Democratic Republic of the Congo
3. Germany
4. Japan
5. United States
6. China
7. Zambia
8. Russia
9. South Korea
10. Italy

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<sup>1</sup> This list is based solely on findings from the [U.S. Department of State's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) and the [U.S. Department of Labor's 2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor and Forced Labor](#).

<sup>2</sup> [International Trade Center, Trade Map](#). (ITC Calculations based on UNCOMTRADE Statistics).

## Where is copper reportedly produced with forced labor and/or child labor?

According to the U.S. Department of State's *2025 Trafficking in Persons Report*, copper is produced with child labor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and forced labor in Serbia.<sup>3</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's *2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, copper ore is produced with child labor in Zambia, and copper/copper products are produced with child labor in the DRC.<sup>4</sup>

Serbia and Zambia are listed as Tier 2 countries by the U.S. Department of State's *2025 Trafficking in Persons Report*; the DRC is listed as Tier 2 Watch List.<sup>5</sup>

## What does human trafficking and/or child labor in copper production look like?

This section includes countries with publicly available research and reporting on forced labor and child labor, in addition to the countries listed in the above-mentioned government reports.

Copper mining and cobalt mining are linked, as an estimated 60 percent of global cobalt production is mined as a byproduct of copper. Most of the world's cobalt comes from the **DRC**, most commonly as a byproduct of copper mining.<sup>6</sup> For more details on findings and risks in cobalt production, see Verité's *Cobalt* commodity report on the Responsible Sourcing Tool website.

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<sup>3</sup> [U.S. Department of State. 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report. 2025.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [U.S. Department of Labor. List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor. 2024.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [For the 2025 Trafficking in Person Report's tier ranking methodology, see "A Guide to the Tiers."](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Cobalt Life Cycle | Cobalt Institute.](#)

In copper-cobalt mining, there are human rights abuses reported in both artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)<sup>7</sup> and large-scale mining (LSM).<sup>8</sup>

In the DRC, the expansion of industrial-scale copper and cobalt mines comes with the growing demand for rechargeable lithium batteries, which are made with metals including copper and cobalt and used to power electric cars, phones, and other electronics.

A 2021 report by the NGO RAID found that Congolese workers employed at five copper-cobalt mines (subcontractors of Chinese companies) with fixed-term contracts do not earn a living wage, have little access to healthcare, work in unsafe conditions, and are subjected to discrimination and abuse.

Two interviewed workers reported working over 30 days without a rest day and working intense periods of double shifts totaling 21 hours per day with little rest time and no additional leave. Physical abuse and degrading punishments by superiors were common.<sup>9</sup> Workers reported they were not provided with personal protective equipment, or were given poor quality equipment, and that they had witnessed fatal accidents resulting from poor safety standards. High-risk situations noted in the report include climbing scaffolding without a safety harness and driving vehicles on unstable ground. Various chronic health problems are also linked to mining, including conjunctivitis and lung disease due to dust exposure.

Subcontracted workers, despite having the same association rights as direct employees, face obstacles to joining or forming unions due to temporary contracts and recurring transfers of workers between subcontractors. Interviewed workers noted that most labor agencies did not offer the possibility to form or join unions or would threaten workers who make requests with dismissal. Those who did join unions

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<sup>7</sup> Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) refers to a largely informal economic sector that includes workers around the world who use basic tools to extract a wide range of minerals and metals from the earth. ASM activities are usually informal and may be illegal or unregulated; however, when ASM is properly managed, it provides an important source of livelihood for individuals and communities. ASM is usually conducted by individuals or small groups of people, although it may include larger partnerships or cooperatives. ASM is defined based on the type of equipment used, level of formality, depth of the work, size of the surface area, volumes produced, and other criteria.

<sup>8</sup> [Rights and Accountability in Development \(RAID\) and Centre d'Aide Juridico-Judiciaire \(CAJJ\). The Road to Ruin? Electric Vehicles and Workers' Rights Abuses at DR Congo's Industrial Cobalt Mines. November 2021.](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Rights and Accountability in Development \(RAID\) and Centre d'Aide Juridico-Judiciaire \(CAJJ\). The Road to Ruin? Electric Vehicles and Workers' Rights Abuses at DR Congo's Industrial Cobalt Mines. November 2021.](#)

found that the unions are controlled by the employer and ineffective for responding to Congolese workers' concerns.<sup>10</sup>

Per 2023 estimates, approximately two million Congolese miners work in artisanal copper-cobalt mines in the DRC.<sup>11</sup> Artisanal mines are often under-capitalized, ad hoc, informal mining sites that rely on manual labor performed by adults and children to extract material. They are less regulated than industrial large-scale mines and are not regularly visited by labor inspectors.<sup>12</sup>

Artisanal miners are reportedly subjected to very poor labor and living conditions, with little to no access to proper sanitation, electricity, medical care, or education. Artisanal miners develop life-long respiratory illnesses due to the fumes they are exposed to in the mines, sustain injuries while working, and experience physical and sexual violence. In addition to respiratory illnesses, cancer, chronic headaches, skin conditions, miscarriages, and birth defects reportedly occur in the children of adults who worked without proper protective equipment. Children working in the mines are also more vulnerable to various health conditions, such as seizures and vomiting.<sup>13</sup>

The *2025 Trafficking in Persons Report* states that children are exploited in forced labor in the illegal mining of minerals, including copper, in the DRC.<sup>14</sup> Children involved in copper mining are most likely working in ASM. 2023 media reporting also describes the abduction and trafficking of children to work in copper-cobalt mines that fund militia groups.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [Rights and Accountability in Development \(RAID\) and Centre d'Aide Juridico-Judiciaire \(CAJJ\). The Road to Ruin? Electric Vehicles and Workers' Rights Abuses at DR Congo's Industrial Cobalt Mines. November 2021.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Boyle, Louise. "'Here it is better not to be born': Cobalt mining for Big Tech is driving child labor, deaths in the Congo." \*Independent\*. February 23, 2023.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [U.S. Department of Labor. From Artisanal Mines to Electric Cars: How does cobalt mined with child labor end up in rechargeable lithium-ion batteries?](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Boyle, Louise. "'Here it is better not to be born': Cobalt mining for Big Tech is driving child labor, deaths in the Congo." \*Independent\*. February 23, 2023.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [U.S. Department of State. \*2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo\*. 2025.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Gross, Terry. "How 'modern-day slavery' in the Congo powers the rechargeable battery economy." \*National Public Radio\*. 2023.](#)

In 2019, the organization International Rights Advocates (IRAdvocates) filed a lawsuit against Apple, Google, Dell, Microsoft, and Tesla for aiding and abetting the death and injury of children in their copper-cobalt supply chain. IRAdvocates spoke on behalf of parents and children in the DRC: tunnel collapses and strenuous labor, including carrying heavy loads and crawling through tunnels, have caused severe limb and spine injuries, paralysis, and even death for numerous children in these copper-cobalt mines. The claim alleges that children were working illegally for the United Kingdom mining company Glencore, where extracted cobalt is then sold to the above tech companies.<sup>16</sup> The lawsuit was dismissed in 2024 by a United States federal court; the judge ruled that although the cobalt suppliers and subsidiaries actively solicit child labor to meet the tech companies demand for cobalt, “there is no shared enterprise between the Companies and the suppliers who facilitate forced labor” and the plaintiffs failed to allege that the companies participated in those ventures.<sup>17</sup>

Other human rights harms have been reported in association with copper-cobalt mining in the DRC. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by the bulldozing of their communities to make way for large mining concessions owned by overseas companies. Per 2023 reporting, people have been forcibly evicted, threatened, or coerced into leaving their homes. In some cases, settlements were burned down by soldiers to force residents out of the area.<sup>18</sup> As a result, many people were left with no alternative ways to support themselves or their families except to work in these mines, earning an average of \$1 to \$2 USD per day. Armed militias reportedly coerce families, including children, to work in the mines.<sup>19</sup>

**China** contains many of the top copper smelters and refineries in the world, in addition to copper mines. China smelts 50 percent and refines about 41 percent of the world’s copper: both processes result in metallic copper, produced via electrolysis or chemical processes, respectively. Copper processing in the

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<sup>16</sup> [Kelly, Annie. “Apple and Google named in US lawsuit over Congolese child cobalt mining deaths.” \*The Guardian\*. December 16, 2019.](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Federal appeals court throws out lawsuit against Apple, Google, Tesla and other tech giants over alleged child labor in Congo](#) | CNN Business. March 2024.

<sup>18</sup> [DRC: Powering Change or Business as Usual? - Amnesty International](#). Sept 2023.

<sup>19</sup> [Gross, Terry. “How ‘modern-day slavery’ in the Congo powers the rechargeable battery economy.” National Public Radio](#). 2023.

**Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)** is linked to the automotive sector, as part of plating electronic components.<sup>20</sup> Large state-owned corporations (operating the largest copper mine deposits in the XUAR, and copper smelters and refineries) reportedly have participated in the government’s “labor transfers,” beginning in 2017, which place local Uyghur residents into employment at various mines and facilities in XUAR. The program involves pre-job training for students, including lectures on religious extremism, paramilitary training, “ethnic unity education,” among other political topics, and a punitive system including loss of up to CNY 1,000 in salary for not performing well. Uyghur teachers are reportedly not allowed to leave the training center, even when suffering from illness.

Trainees were also reportedly forced to perform manual labor, such as cleaning ball mills (used to grind copper ore) with a chemical solvent that is harmful if inhaled or ingested, clearing acres of trees and other mine groundskeeping, and other labor-intensive activities. Nineteen of a group of 40 transferred laborers fell ill during their six-month training, according to reporting.<sup>21</sup> As of July 2025, details on other labor conditions and practices at copper mines or copper processing centers in China were not available.

These state-sponsored labor transfer programs, which according to the CCP provide intensive education and training to the transferred people, including language, military, and ideological training through “re-education camps,”<sup>22</sup> are implemented across sectors. They are regarded as violating the human rights of ethnic minorities in XUAR internment camps based on evidence of arbitrary detention, forced labor, physical abuse, food deprivation, lack of medical care, and overall denial of religious and cultural freedoms.<sup>23</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the following indicators of forced labor have been identified in association with the labor transfer programs in the XUAR and other provinces, across a variety of sectors including electronics, solar energy, and the automotive sector:<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Murphy, L., Salcito, K., Uluyol, Y., Rabkin, M., et al (2022). [“Driving Force: Automotive Supply Chains and Forced Labor in the Uyghur Region.”](#) Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Hallam University Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, December 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Murphy, L., Salcito, K., Uluyol, Y., Rabkin, M., et al (2022). [“Driving Force: Automotive Supply Chains and Forced Labor in the Uyghur Region.”](#) Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Hallam University Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, December 2022.

<sup>22</sup> “Who are the Uyghurs and why is China being accused of genocide?” [BBC News](#). May 2022.

<sup>23</sup> [Text - H.R.2349 - 119th Congress \(2025-2026\): Uyghur Human Rights Protection Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#). March 2025.

<sup>24</sup> [“Shining a Light on Exploitation in the Solar Supply Chain.”](#) U.S. Department of Labor.

- Intimidation and threats
- Abuse of vulnerability
- Restriction of movement
- Abuse of isolation
- Involuntary excessive overtime
- Lack of access to identity documents
- Abusive working conditions

In Zambia's Copperbelt, organized criminal groups are involved in copper theft and illegal copper mining. Zambian children are forced into illegal mining operations and carry out tasks such as loading stolen copper or crushing rocks.<sup>25</sup>

Illegal mining represents serious health and safety risks for miners, given the risk of mine collapse. Illegal miners in Zambia have been known to steal already-mined copper that is waiting for collection, or work in abandoned shafts. While some illegal activity is conducted by individuals, organized criminal groups operate in a structured manner with local gangs, called "jerabos," to mine ore, and recruit children to perform tasks including loading copper onto trucks. Illegal miners primarily sell to licensed copper traders, some of whom are influential organized crime figures. Reporting indicates that they own legitimate mining operations to serve as a front for the illegal copper.<sup>26</sup>

There are serious environmental impacts from copper mining in Zambia, as well as other countries, including long-term water pollution in Zambia. Toxic mining waste from copper mines has reportedly been dumped into the Kafue River for many years, resulting in the destruction of the river's ecosystems.<sup>27</sup> Previous reporting estimated that the Chingola province of Zambia produced 93,000 tons of mining waste in one year, most of which was dumped into the river. This environmental degradation can lead to increasing vulnerability of local populations. Sulfuric acid is used in copper extraction,

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<sup>25</sup> [U.S. Department of State. 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report. 2024.](#)

<sup>26</sup> [U.S. Department of State. 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report. 2024.](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Chinese Copper Mine Spill 'Kills' River in Zambia - Africa Defense Forum.](#) April 2025.

Vidal, John. "[Zambian Villagers Take Mining Giant Vedanta to Court in UK over Toxic Leaks.](#)" *The Guardian*. August 1, 2015.

creating “acidic mists” that can damage skin, eye, and lungs, and “destroy crops, deteriorate the quality of the land, and damage nearby buildings,” according to a study conducted by Danwatch. The mists are also carcinogenic, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer.<sup>28</sup> In 2015, villagers in a Zambian mining region sued a mining company for catastrophic health and livelihood damage. According to a leaked Canada government report, sulfuric acid had spilled and leached into the drinking water and soil, making local villages uninhabitable.<sup>29</sup>

In 2017, Amnesty International reported on human rights violations in copper mines in **Burma**. Many copper mines in Burma are co-owned by Chinese companies and the Burmese military. Reporting found that these mining operations pushed residents off their land through forceful eviction procedures, leaving them unable to provide for themselves through traditional farming. The mining expansion in Burma has also been linked to environmental disasters, as mines are developed on flood plains and areas prone to earthquakes without carrying out environmental assessments. In the case of a flood or earthquake, waste from the mines is likely to contaminate the local community’s water sources. Local authorities used repressive laws to prevent activists and local villagers from protesting the mines.<sup>30</sup> Al Jazeera News has reported that Canadian- and Chinese-owned mines are the sites of protests and violence, describing the mining area in Burma as having “numerous incidents spanning two decades including mass evictions, the use of ‘excessive force’ by security forces, and ‘serious’ pollution linked to the project.”<sup>31</sup>

Protests of copper mining operations have also led to clashes with police and incidents of police brutality in **India** (2018) and **Peru** (2015).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> [Danwatch. \*Broken Promises 2015: Environmental and Human Rights Impacts Behind EU Import of African Raw Materials.\*](#) August 15, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> [Danwatch. \*Broken Promises 2015: Environmental and Human Rights Impacts Behind EU Import of African Raw Materials.\*](#) August 15, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> [Amnesty International. “Myanmar: Suspend copper mine linked to ongoing human rights abuses.”](#) Feb 2017.

<sup>31</sup> [Henton, George. “Foreign firms and human rights abuses in Myanmar Forced evictions and violence at copper mines in northern Myanmar continue after decades of profit-making, report says.”](#) *Al Jazeera News*. February 10, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> [Amnesty International. “Urgent Action: Protesters Being Held in Administrative Detention.”](#) July 3, 2018. [Amnesty International. “Peru: The Price of Protest Must Not be Death.”](#) May 26, 2015.

Fatal incidents are frequently reported in mining operations, including copper mines, as a result of operational hazards, flooding, mudslides, and sinkholes. Due to deaths in **Chile**, **Peru**, and **Mexico**, there are calls for improved safety policies and procedures for the large companies that own mines in this region.<sup>33</sup> Deaths resulting from landslides and collapses at copper mines are similarly reported in Zambia and the DRC, and in **Kazakhstan**.<sup>34</sup>

### Copper Supply Chain and Production:

Copper ore is extracted from open-pit and underground mines. Copper is rarely found in its pure form; it is most often found mixed with other minerals.<sup>35</sup> After the ore is collected, the copper metal undergoes mineral processing where it is separated from rock materials into a concentrate form that is 20 to 30 percent copper.<sup>36</sup> The next step, smelting or leaching, removes impurity elements such as iron and sulfur. The smelting product may contain up to 60 percent copper. The refining stage then removes the last traces of impurities and creates a copper product that is nearly 100 percent pure, known as “blister copper,” which is used in consumer and industrial goods.<sup>37</sup>

The raw or unrefined copper is sold by miners to traders (or middlemen), who then sell to end users such as construction firms, electronics manufacturers, and others who use copper in production processes.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Karim, Naimul. “[Three miners die at Peru copper mine run by Toronto's Sierra Metals.](#)” *Financial Post*. Sept 2022.

<sup>34</sup> [DR Congo mine collapse death toll rises to 43 | News | Al Jazeera](#). June 28, 2019.

[Rescuers have recovered 11 bodies after landslides at a Zambia mine. More than 30 are feared dead | AP News](#). Dec 11, 2023. [Seven Dead in Mine Collapse in Central Kazakhstan - The Astana Times](#). Feb. 18, 2025.

<sup>35</sup> [Copper – From Beginning to End. Copper Development Association Inc.](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Extraction of Copper: Detailed Process. Science Info.](#) 2023.

<sup>37</sup> [Copper processing - Ores, Refining, Smelting | Britannica. Extraction of Copper: Detailed Process. Science Info.](#) 2023.

<sup>38</sup> [Comprehensive Guide to Copper Mineral Trading](#). Minerals Base.

How consumers are linked to human trafficking and/or child labor in copper production:

Top ten countries that import copper:<sup>39</sup>

<b>1.</b> China	<b>6.</b> South Korea
<b>2.</b> United States	<b>7.</b> Turkey
<b>3.</b> Germany	<b>8.</b> Thailand
<b>4.</b> Italy	<b>9.</b> Belgium
<b>5.</b> India	<b>10.</b> France

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, copper is most frequently used for “power transmission and generation, building wiring, telecommunication, and electrical and electronic products.” Copper wires and plumbing are used in construction, telecommunications, and vehicles.<sup>40</sup> Cobalt, a copper byproduct, is used in the production of every modern smartphone, electric car, and computer as it is found in almost all lithium rechargeable batteries. The global demand for cobalt is projected to rise from 46,000 metric tons in 2017 to about 190,000 metric tons by 2026.<sup>41</sup>

Examples of what governments, corporations, and others are doing:

#### **The Copper Mark**

The Copper Mark aims to produce, source, and recycle copper, molybdenum, nickel and zinc responsibly using a framework defining the expectations for responsible production. Standards and guidance for companies include a theory of change; due diligence standard; environmental and scrap supplier risk assessment tools; assessment criteria; and monitoring and evaluation system. As of July 2025, there are

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<sup>39</sup> [International Trade Center \(ITC Calculations based on UNCOMTRADE Statistics\).](#)

<sup>40</sup> [U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\). “Copper Statistics and Information.”](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Klobucista, Claire. “The Cobalt Boom.” \*Council on Foreign Relations\*, 15 June 2018.](#)

53 partners including Amazon, Google, Siemens Energy, and large car manufacturers including Audi, Ford Motor Company, and Volvo Cars. The website also lists sites around the world that have been assessed and granted a mark of compliance, and those that were suspended.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Nickel Mark**

In November 2022, the Nickel Mark was launched by the Nickel Institute, the Copper Mark, the International Zinc Association, and the International Molybdenum Association. The Nickel Mark “covers a wider range of environmental, social and governance risks and responds to the increasing assurance requirements of regulatory and value chain initiatives.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Joint Due Diligence Standard for Copper, Lead, Molybdenum, Nickel, and Zinc**

The Nickel Institute has partnered with the Copper Mark, the International Lead Association, the International Molybdenum Association, the International Zinc Association, and the Responsible Minerals Initiative to publish a Joint Due Diligence Standard for copper, lead, molybdenum, nickel and zinc, which aligns with the London Metal Exchange Responsible Sourcing requirements. The Joint Due Diligence Standard is designed to enable effective due diligence for producers and/or traders of copper, lead, molybdenum, nickel, and zinc, taking each of those metals’ unique risk profiles into account.<sup>44</sup>

### **OECD’s Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas**

The OECD’s *Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High Risk Areas* is the main global standard developed for critical minerals. It elaborates on the concept of human rights due diligence from the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and applies

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<sup>42</sup> [About - The Copper Mark](#).

<sup>43</sup> [“Responsible Sourcing and ESG Due Diligence.” Nickel Institute.](#)

<sup>44</sup> [“Responsible Sourcing and ESG Due Diligence.” Nickel Institute.](#)

to the sourcing of all minerals, including copper. It requires all companies in a supply chain to conduct due diligence on their suppliers when sourcing from conflict-affected and high-risk areas.<sup>45</sup>

### **The DRC's National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labor in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites, 2017–2025**

In the DRC, the government produced the *National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labor in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites* (2017–2025) to eradicate child labor in Congolese mines. As part of the strategy and implementation, the Commission Interministérielle de Suivi de la Thématique de l'Enfant dans les Mines Artisanales (CISTEMA) launched the Child Labor Monitoring System to identify and remove children from mines.<sup>46</sup> According to media reports in March 2018, the DRC government launched new monitoring and tracing mechanisms designed to address child labor in copper and cobalt production in artisanal and small-scale mining, as well as larger operations run by bigger mining firms.<sup>47</sup>

### **Zambia's Mining and Environmental Remediation and Improvement Project**

The Zambian government, in conjunction with the World Bank, developed the Mining and Environmental Remediation and Improvement Project. This project, initiated in 2016 and closed in 2024, aimed to “reduce environmental health risks to the local population in critically polluted mining areas.” The plan included remediating immediate hotspots, improving environmental policy and enforcement in the mining sector, and reducing environmental health risks through decentralized, local interventions.<sup>48</sup> In 2020, over 10,000 children who live in areas contaminated by mining operations were reportedly tested for lead exposure, then provided chelation therapy (to bind lead into a compound and filter it out through the kidneys) or vitamin supplements and protein to bring down their blood lead levels.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> [OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High Risk Areas. Third Edition. April 6, 2016.](#)

<sup>46</sup> [2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Democratic Republic of the Congo | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)

<sup>47</sup> [Reuters. Congo says will campaign to prevent child labor in cobalt mines. March 1, 2018.](#)

<sup>48</sup> [The World Bank. “Zambia – Mining and Environmental Remediation and Improvement Project.” 2024.](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Work Bank Group. “Living with Lead in Zambia: Creating Hope for the Children of Kabwe.” Dec. 17, 2020.](#)

## **Zambia's National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 2020-2025**

Zambia's 2020-2025 national action plan addressing the elimination of the worst forms of child labor (WFCL), developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with support from the International Labor Organization, aims to strengthen prevention efforts and responses to WFCL by addressing socioeconomic issues at the household and community levels, as well as in institutions and enterprises. Mining and quarrying is considered a hazardous industry in Zambia, representing one of the most prominent sectors impacted by WFCL.<sup>50</sup>

### **USAID and the Fair Cobalt Alliance (FCA) - Professionalizing the Artisanal Copper-Cobalt Supply Chain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Launched in January 2025, a partnership between USAID and the FCA pilots a new model for legal and responsibly sourced cobalt from artisanal mines in the Lualaba province. USAID's funding strengthens existing field operations and implementing standards operated by the Entreprise Générale du Cobalt, with the goal of ensuring that "Congolese artisanal copper-cobalt is mined responsibly and adheres to international standards, including the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. Through these efforts, the pilot activity aims to create a replicable and scalable model for artisanal mining that can be expanded to other sites across the DRC."<sup>51</sup>

### **Tariff Act and Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act**

Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended, states that "all goods, wares, articles, and merchandise mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part in any foreign country by convict labor and/or forced labor or/and indentured labor under penal sanctions shall not be entitled to entry at any

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<sup>50</sup> ["National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 2020-2025." Republic of Zambia Ministry of Labour and Social Security.](#)

<sup>51</sup> [U.S. Joins Partnership to Promote Responsibly Sourced Artisanal Cobalt - U.S. Embassy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#). January 14, 2025.

of the ports of the United States, and the importation thereof is hereby prohibited...." (19 U.S.C. § 1307).<sup>52</sup>

In 2021, the United States enacted the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA). The UFLPA established a rebuttable presumption (presumed in violation unless evidence shows otherwise) that goods mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, or by an entity on the UFLPA Entity List, are prohibited from U.S. importation under Section 307 of the Tariff Act. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol enforces these acts. Under the UFLPA, an interagency Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force is directed to develop a strategy for "supporting enforcement of the prohibition on the importation of goods into the United States manufactured wholly or in part with forced labor in the People's Republic of China, especially from the XUAR."<sup>53</sup>

Where can I learn more?

[Read a report about child-mined minerals in the DRC.](#)

[Watch a documentary about copper mines in Zambia.](#)

[Watch a documentary following copper diggers in the DRC.](#)

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<sup>52</sup> ["Forced Labor Enforcement."](#) U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 3 Feb 2025.

<sup>53</sup> ["Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act."](#) U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 4 Feb 2025.