



CASE STUDY #4

Credit: Reuters, Siegfried Mondola

## FINDING EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO REDUCE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR: INTRODUCING PACE

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All members of the Partnership Against Child Exploitation (PACE): [www.pace-consortium.org](http://www.pace-consortium.org)

### INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, 152 million children are estimated to be involved in child labor (ILO 2017). Much of this exploitation is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL) (ILO 1999). In the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it is estimated that between 30 percent and 40 percent of all children aged 5-14 are engaged in child labor (USDOL 2018a; 2018b), with underage labor in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sites, children recruited into armed groups, and trafficking of girls into sexual exploitation among the most notorious examples. The extractives industry in particular is often singled out for criticism; with weak regulation in the two countries struggling with chronic conflict and poverty, the exploitation of children in the extraction of valuable minerals such as diamonds and tin, tungsten, tantalum, and gold (3TGs)—essential for the production of jewelry, mobile phones, computers, and renewable energy technology—is widespread. The economic uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is only likely to make this worse.

Working with national governments and industry stakeholders in the DRC, CAR, and Ethiopia, the Partnership Against Child Exploitation (PACE) is combatting the exploitation of children in ASM (Box 5). Specifically, the six-partner consortium—comprising World Vision, Columbia University, Fifty Eight, Thomson Reuters Foundation, UN Global Compact Network UK, and War Child—is working with vulnerable communities to empower children and their families to resist exploitation and improve access to education and economic opportunities, while simultaneously supporting governments and the extractives sector to strengthen industry regulation, improve supply chain due diligence, and bring those exploiting children to justice.

Through this work, PACE will generate new data on the nature of WFCL in ASM, and what approaches can be most effective in its prevention. Drawing on the unique strengths of each partner, the interventions will contribute directly to Sustainable Development Target 8.7 to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and eliminate the worst forms of child labor (UNGA 2020).

### A new model for mapping worst forms of child labor in ASM

To generate new data on WFCL in ASM, PACE partner Fifty Eight has developed a new model for supply chain mapping and due diligence that maps the chain from the bottom up and captures the contribution of informal economic activities—where child labor is most commonly found. In line with McQuilken and Hilson (2018) advocating for the need of more detailed knowledge of ASM production networks, the supply chain analysis follows a two-pronged approach. First tracing the chain from bottom-up identifying where and how children are involved both directly and indirectly at each stage. Second, from the top-down mapping existing traceability or due diligence practices and impacts, including unintended consequences for children and families. Although yet to be deployed, the model will also identify social norms and behaviors of different actors within the supply chain that might encourage or exacerbate the use of child labor and pilot grassroots led approaches to implementing international

policy such as the European Union Responsible Minerals legislation (European Commission 2017). By deploying this approach, alongside labor market and supply chain assessments, PACE aims to identify how local and global businesses can better combat WFCL and help vulnerable communities into safer livelihoods. Evidence generated through the trials in CAR and DRC will also inform how these approaches can be scaled to other countries and sectors.

A large percentage of DRC and CAR exports—and hence foreign exchange—come from a combination of legal and illegal mineral extraction. But the income received by these countries from these activities does not reflect this. For example, in DRC 40 percent of taxation on mineral extraction should be returned to regional and local governments which would have major impact on local economy and social service—particularly for children and families. PACE will seek to pilot interventions which directly address this challenge.

Consortium partners World Vision and War Child have decades of experience delivering child protection programs in PACE's target locations. Based on this, a package of local interventions has been launched over the years to reduce WFCL in a sustainable way. This includes identification of children at risk of, or involved in, the WFCL, working with local schools to reintegrate out-of-school children into education and investing in safe learning environments, supporting community-level advocacy against WFCL, and establishing savings and loans schemes alongside small business training to strengthen local economies.

The program design and decision-making processes behind these activities have been driven by a strong set of data from the analysis of existing secondary data sources. Most importantly they have also been driven by data generated during the co-creation and early implementation phase through community consultations, research, mapping, and assessments.

The truly holistic approach adopted by PACE—investigating the push and pull factors of WFCL at all levels—is designed to grow the global evidence base on how to reduce child exploitation, with Columbia University leading a range of mixed methods eval-

uations and longitudinal studies to ensure PACE activities contribute robust learning to the global fight against child labor. This is not without complications. Being illegal and typically conducted in areas of highly informalized economic activity, there is no commonly accepted standard for measuring levels of WFCL. Moreover, the relationship between child labor and social norms in the corporate world is largely unexplored. To address these gaps, PACE has developed a new methodology to triangulate findings from key informants with existing data to present a more accurate picture of the levels of WFCL. PACE is also working with corporate decision makers to design a bespoke analytical framework to examine social norms and how they relate to child exploitation at the most localized levels of global supply chains.

The engagement of national and international media is also key in the fight against WFCL. The media is uniquely placed to influence and shape the social norms that inform our attitudes and practice, whether as governments, corporations, or individuals. Led by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, PACE is supporting local radio stations to raise awareness of the WFCL and the dangers posed to children through a range of training, mentoring and broadcast development support.<sup>1</sup>

## Ensuring reliable data collection

Given the complexity of capturing reliable information about the WFCL in ASM, the PACE consortium is adapting research methods that can capture this hard-to-measure issue. One approach that has been adopted with some success is embedding researchers as participant-observers in program teams. While maintaining a level of objectivity, these researchers can systematically interact with children and youth, program team members, and community stakeholders and document the experiences of each of these respective groups and also connect to, and take part in, the community-level partnerships that are essential to effectively work in these fraught and fragile contexts.

PACE is also ensuring robust triangulation of data across multiple sources to ensure that a clearer

picture of the realities of the drivers of the worst forms of child labor emerge. For example, when exploring what factors promote children's involvement in ASM, the perceptions of parents and caregivers, children themselves, mine owners and managers, and others in the community are captured to then explore various hypotheses in analyzing the complex interactions that can lead to divergent data.

The program is also drawing upon age-old ethnographic tools to understand the lived realities of children involved in the WFCL. This includes open-ended life stories that can help understand the

### BOX 5. PACE Engagement and Collaboration with the Private Sector

Throughout 2020-2021, the UN Global Compact Network UK (UNGCN UK) is hosting a series of business roundtables to collate examples of corporate best practice in tackling WFCL. A Private Sector Strategic Advisory Panel is acting as a conduit between the private sector and PACE by channeling company perspectives, experience, insights, and knowledge. A Child Labor Working Group has been meeting to discuss the challenges of combating WFCL in global supply chains. Both groups consist of international companies with global operations. Evidence and learning from these initiatives and the wider PACE program will be disseminated through the UNGCN UK's national and international networks to influence practice on a global scale.

PACE actively welcomes contributions from new partners who wish to support combating child exploitation; especially businesses working in ASM or the wider extractives sector. Companies who are interested in supporting PACE should contact the UNGCN UK representative: **Benafsha Charlick-Delgado**: *benafsha.delgado@unglobalcompact.org.uk*

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complexity of factors that can drive children into exploitative situations and what potential paths out of exploitation may exist. At a research design level, given the near-impossibility of conducting randomized-controlled trials, a number of different quasi-experimental designs are being combined to examine how interventions may impact children and families at school and community levels.

## Conclusion

Ending child labor in ASM is an enormous challenge, requiring coordinated and sustained effort from governments, corporations, civil society, and families themselves. For PACE, working in such resource-scarce contexts, this challenge is magnified many times over. One of the primary challenges is related to the lack of reliable data, in fragile conflict affected contexts characterized by the presence of armed

groups, high levels of informality as well as the presence of illegal activities such as corruption. Accessing or generating reliable data is extremely complicated but also very important to be able to design evidence-based interventions and conduct the necessary analysis needed to monitor intervention outcomes and results and adapt activities and approaches throughout. The multi-pronged approach adopted by PACE is fundamental to bringing about real change; and a clear analysis of the impact brought about through these wide-ranging interventions is central to informing future work at scale.

Combatting the exploitation of children in some of the WFCL, such as ASM, is not the responsibility of governments or civil society alone. The private sector has extensive expertise and experience of the industries in which children are most commonly exploited; expertise and experience that are crucial to ending the exploitation of children.

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### END NOTES

- 1 PACE will ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to protect children who may be at risk of stigma

or retaliation by anonymizing content among other safeguarding measures.

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