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ZIJIN OPERATING IN THE DRC

Dave Evans · Oct 29, 2023

**Dave Evans**

Regular

Oct 29, 2023

#1

Multiple media sources report that Chinese mining company Zijin Mining while operating in Africa (the DRC, Guyana and other states) and other countries has committed bribery, illegal fraud, threatening Mines.cd founding journalist with death, human rights and other violations in Kolwezi, evicting residents from homes, negligence resulting in workers death in Guyana, performing mining works without documentation and approval of the competent authority, polluting villages, shipping radioactive cobalt to South Africa and other crimes

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5934d2ae6b8f5beeb5ba23f3/t/638ee2df77e76824d82d6fff/1670308576126/20221130+-IGF+Report+on+the+Management+of+DRC+Mining+Assets+by+COMINIERE+SA+-+ENG.pdf>

Lithium Manono: How is ZIJIN with the illegal 15% (IGF) part of DATHCOM without any court decision?



[kongopress.com](https://www.kongopress.com)

Lithium Manono : Comment ZIJIN avec les 15% illégaux (IGF) fait-elle partie de DATHCOM sans aucune...

<https://static1.squarespace.com/sta...f+DRC+Mining+Assets+by+COMINIERE+SA+-+ENG.pdf>

Stéphanie Mukinzi was threatened with death for her investigations into the living conditions of the population around the mines of the Chinese groups, Ruashi Mining and ZIJIN

[kongopress.com](https://www.kongopress.com)

COMMUS, a subsidiary of Zijin Mining, accused of serious human rights violations in Kolwezi



[econewsrdc.com](https://www.econewsrdc.com)

Le Chinois ZIJIN MINING se moque de la politique minière de Félix Tshisekedi :

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In Kolwezi in the Lualaba province where more than 39,000 people live. Hundreds of residents have received orders to leave their homes without being consulted after the plans to expand the ZIJIN mine. Many houses have already been destroyed



kongopress.com

[Rapport d'Amnesty International sur les minerais des batteries et les droits humains bafoués en RDC...](#)

Zijin's Negligence: How the Demolition of the Smelter Cost a Worker His Life

<https://cins.rs/en/zijin-s-negligence-how-the-demolition-of-the-smelter-cost-a-worker-his-life/>

In less than a year, the company Zijin was convicted four times for the same commercial offence, each time fined below the legal minimum

<https://reri.org.rs/en/in-less-than-a-year-the-company-zijin-was-convicted-four-times-for-the-same-commercial-offence-each-time-fined-below-the-legal-minimum/#:~:text=News%20%2F%20Zijin%20Copper-,In%20less%20than%20a%20year%2C%20the%20company%20Zijin%20was%20convicted,the%20legal%20minimum%20each%20time.>



reri.org.rs

[In less than a year, the company Zijin was convicted four times for the same commercial offence,...](#)

China's Zijin mine polluting Serbian village



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asiafinancial.com

Nov 7, 2023

[China's Zijin Mining Polluting Serbian Village, Says Group](#)

#2

05/09/2023

Report stating Stéphanie Mukinzi was threatened with death for her investigations into the living conditions of the population around the mines of the Chinese groups, Ruashi Mining and ZIJIN.

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Nov 29, 2023

🔗 #3

28/09/2023

Chinese State-owned Zijin Mining Under International Scrutiny

Its track record is tainted by allegations of labor exploitation, environmental damage, and safety deficiencies. But beyond its operations, Zijin's close relationship with the Chinese Communist Party casts an additional shadow over its actions in nations with loose regulations, Argentine news site *Infobae* reported.



Chinese State-owned Zijin Mining Under International Scrutiny

In a world where business activities are under constant global scrutiny, Zijin Mining, a Chinese state-owned company specializing in gold and lithium mining, stands out as a symbol of persistent concerns about its impact and operating practices in Latin America and beyond, Radio FM Bolivia reported.

👉 dialogo-americas.com

Last edited: Dec 15, 2023

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Top 20

Dec 1, 2023

🔗 #4

01/12/2023

More deaths at Zijin operated mines in Africa (Provided by Dominic Furfaro on Twitter)

Guyana labor ministry investigates death at Zijin gold mine

[Reuters](#) | November 27, 2023 | 11:30 am

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Aurora gold mine in Guyana. (Image courtesy of [Guyana Goldfields](#).)

Guyana's labor ministry on Monday said it was investigating the death of a truck operator earlier this month at the country's north-western Aurora Gold Mines, operated by China's Zijin.

The ministry said the death had resulted from a collision between two truck operators from a Chinese state-owned engineering company at the mine on Saturday, Nov. 18.

Labor Minister Joseph Hamilton in a statement expressed his concern about workplace fatalities and encouraged workers and employers to ensure a safe working environment.

The incident happened days before an overhang collapsed at concession belonging to a Zijin subsidiary in nearby Suriname, causing the deaths of 15 informal gold miners, according to Surinamese authorities, and prompting two days of national mourning.

The subsidiary, Rosebel Gold Mines, said at the time it regretted the deaths and had unsuccessfully tried to evict the informal miners.

Elsewhere in South America, a 2021 *Reuters* investigation showed that some tunnels in Zijin's Buritica concession in Colombia are controlled by the Clan del Golfo crime gang, which buys output from informal miners working there.

(By Sarah Morland)



Guyana labor ministry investigates death at Zijin gold mine

The ministry said the death had resulted from a collision between two truck operators.

 www.mining.com

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AVZ EFX LLL
Jan 12, 2024

 #5



Dave Evans
Regular

Dave Evans
[@DaveEva12049801](#)

Reports from several media sources indicated that Zijin Mining in Africa has committed bribery, fraud, threatening journalist with death, human rights violations in Kolwezi, evicting residents in Kolwezi, negligence resulting in death of Guyana workers, performing works without approval of the authorities

Zijin Mining Group Ltd and Générale des carrières et des mines SA (Gécamines), a state mining company in the DRC.



Housing that was demolished to expand a mineral mine in Kolwezi

RERI Renewables
and Environmental
Regulatory Institute



14. DECEMBER 2022. / LAW ON MINING AND
GEOLOGICAL RESEARCH / NEWS / ZIJIN COPPER

In less than a year, the company Zijin was convicted four times for the same commercial offence, each time fined below the legal minimum

#6



Frank
Top 20

Tanganyika: the suspension of Manono Lithium's activities is debated

The governor of Tanganyika province suspends the quarrying activities of the mining company Manono Lithium for an indefinite period.

She criticizes this Chinese company for non-payment of taxes without specifying them.

Civil society actors in Manono are demanding more transparency from the authorities in the measures they take.

The provincial authority expressed its decision in a decree signed on January 6.

According to this document, "The Manono Lithium company exploits gravel, rubble, and sand without authorization from the province".

In addition, says the governor, the company does not pay state taxes.

Quarry work on behalf of the company Manono Lithium is suspended for non-payment of taxes due to the province and lack of prior authorization.

In addition, this measure applies to the transport and use of construction materials.

Transparency!

Manono's company, for its part, is asking the provincial authority for a little more

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Dieu Merci Kabila, coordinator of the Dynamic Christian Integration Regroupment, demands more transparency.

Last edited: May 13, 2024

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"We met this Wednesday with the administrator of the territory of Manono to try to understand this dispute.

AVZ BHP BRN

What taxes does the company not pay?

However, we have information that Manono Lithium pays fees to the service of SAEMAP.

This gives the impression that the money is not reaching the state coffers.

This is why, at the community level, we do not see any benefits from our mineral wealth.

And to continue, the territorial authority has undertaken to provide us with this information this Friday.

The civil society of Manono reminds that companies have the obligation to pay taxes.

For its part, the State should improve the business climate.

Manono Lithium is a Chinese company which is in the Lithium exploration phase.

She has just opened a road of almost 3 km which leads to her accommodation site.

With the suspension of activities, nearly 200 local agents have been made unemployed.

mediacongo

**Dave Evans**

Regular

**I GET MOST OF MY EXERCISE
THESE DAYS FROM SHAKING
MY HEAD IN DISBELIEF**

19/02/2023

At the heart of the battle for control of Manono lithium by
China in the Democratic Republic of Congo:

February 19, 2023 Jeef Kazadi

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- What does the Chinese company Zijin actually want from the Congolese Cominière SA and Dathcom Mining?
 - Who are the key players in a hostile takeover that looks like a toxic robbery?
- Decryption

(By Simon Bofunga, Jeef Kazadi, Ben Khaya)

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As in the copper, cobalt and zinc sector of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where this Chinese company is at *Kamoa-Kakula and Kipushi Company with Ivanhoe Mines, at Compagnie Minière de Musonoie* with Gécamines as well as other Chinese GEC who control the industrial copper and cobalt of the country at *Sicomines* (Chinese Contract or Contract Mines against Infrastructures) and block the General Company of Cobalt to continue to also control copper and cobalt crafts, by the Chinese from Kolwezi called "SOLEIL" (he is reputed to be the true king of mining crafts and casions in upper Katanga and Lualaba, according to LICOCO which carried out a survey in the two provinces with *the Presidential Anti-Corruption Agency*– APLC for at least six months), **with Congolese accomplices who are members of the institutions of the Republic, Zijin who never invests in mining exploration and research, like any good Chinese in Africa, but excels in violations of laws and of human rights in China and in host countries, wants to help China get its hands on Manono's lithium thanks to Congolese service and non-patriots interested in the illicit enrichment facilitated by the famous Chinese of the country.**

From Perth to Manono: Max Pro 1.0 remake of the battle for control of KML at KCC

After failing to buy several stock shares of AVZ on the Australian Stock Exchange in Perth and after failing to pressure other shareholder Chinese companies (*Huayou and CATHL*) to enter the shareholding of *Dathcom Mining* by irregularly buying shares of *Cominière SA* to control the largest lithium deposit in the world thanks to the vigilance of the Australian stock market regulator – AVZ has more than 21,000 shareholders from several nationalities and continents including Americans, Australians, Europeans, Chinese, etc. -, and after having failed in its attempt to directly buy 15% of *Cominière SA* in *Dathcom Mining SA* thanks to the right of first refusal of *AVZ Minerals* which would ultimately benefit the Republic and *Cominière SA* if the accounts of the shares are well done without emotions, **Zijin has decided to proceed with its malicious and toxic offer, which is in reality a criminal OPA (Public Takeover Offer) and policy supported by politicians including the Chinese ambassador in Kinshasa, the Minister of the Portfolio Adèle Kayinda in collusion with some political dignitaries who have been members of the Union for the Congolese Nation since 2021 known to all those who are interested in the file,**

reminding insiders of that which *Glencore* made against the *Forrest Group* for the control of *Katanga Mining Limited* and *Kamoto Copper Company*(KCC of Kolwezi) almost fifteen years ago with the support of politicians who considered themselves strong men of the regime if not immortal untouchable demiurges.

Klaus Eckoff's 2020 AJN Resources skirmish at Sokimo

However, Zijin 's takeover is more like a robbery against the mining assets of First Quantum Minerals (EQM) by a third party with the help of politicians and technicians

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Some official actors in the administration of mines have not changed heads and methods, although a similar takeover bid by the German and Canadian company *AJN Resources* of Klaus Eckoff failed in 2020, on the assets of *Sokimo* to raise 20 million Canadian dollars, thanks to the decisive vigilance of the NGOs and media members of the "TOUS POUR LA RDC" coalition, which had welcomed the salutary and patriotic decision of the Head of State Félix Antoine Tshisekedi taken thanks to the explanations of some ministers of the time (Ilunga Ilukamba Government) including Mr. Lite, Mwabilu, Kambinga and Kabanda while those of the mines, Kitobo and Portfolio, Kwete did not play fair and had an ambiguous attitude.

The United States of America and Canada opposed to Chinese control of the lithium supply chain since 2022

Indeed, allowing *Zijin* to succeed in its takeover bid for *Cominière SA* 's 15% stake in *Dathcom Mining* for 33.4 million US dollars despite the denunciations of the IGF or giving it the northern part of *Dathcom Mining* 's operating license as says a so-called "confidential" document with content published by Congolese media including *EcoNews*, *Sphynx.cd* and others means undermining the efforts of the President of the Republic Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi against corruption, the selling off of mining assets and the cleaning up of the sector according to his vision; but it is above all to oppose the government of the Republic and President Tshisekedi to the American administration and the Canadian government which do not want China to control critical minerals, mainly lithium and rare earths, and strategic after cobalt and the copper.

La Cominière SA and all official supporters of *Zijin* must thoroughly research the Executive Order signed in 2022 by US President Biden and the measures taken by the Canadian government of Trudeau against Chinese and Chinese-invested companies in this regard and avoid put Westerners on the back of the President of the Republic who is doing a remarkable job in the mining sector.

All official members of the parliamentary and government coalition must avoid repeating against Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi what the late Katumba band (some are still in post at strategic services of the Ministry of Mines) had done at *First Quantum Minerals (FQM)* and at *Kamoto Copper Company (KCC)* by putting on the back of Joseph Kabila in 2009-2010 Canadians and Europeans on the eve of the general elections in the country. We must not repeat the evil, especially in the strategic lithium sector for the benefit of China (through *Zijin*, reputed to be a great violator of laws and human rights in Kolwezi and elsewhere) which already controls more than 90% of the copper and cobalt of the DRC by *Sicomines*, *TFM*, *Kamoa*, *Compagnie Minière de Musonoie*, *Ruashi Mining*, *AMC Kinsevere*, *Huachin Mabenda*, etc.

Who are the key players in Zijin's lithium heist of Manono, Dathcom Mining and AVZ Minerals?

The question seems banal or vulgar but it is rather important, fundamental. The answer to this helps to understand everything that is happening in easy French for dummies in the mining sector of the DRC and the geostrategic stakes, because the actors of what looks like a game of chess or the *Strategoo* otherwise who loses wins are recruited in several circles, in several places. After investigations, cross-checking of data and testimonies, analysis of various documents, the rest of our publications look into it.

As a reminder, history will remember that on May 20, 2022, the international media *Citya.m* was already talking about "a Chinese plot to take control of the Congolese lithium mine".

This media affirmed in its publication with premonitory paces this:

"A plot by a coalition of powerful Chinese battery makers to take control of the world's largest lithium mine is threatening to depress the share price of Australian mining company AVZ Minerals, it said. a mysterious short seller."

AVZ Minerals could lose control of the Manono lithium mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and end up with a minority stake of 36%..., if a plot led by Chinese businessman Simon Cong succeeds, has said Boatman Capital Research in a new report.

The report comes amid a battle for control of the DRC mine between AVZ Minerals and Chinese miner Zijin Mining, which has seen AVZ voluntarily suspend trading of its own shares on the Australian Stock Exchange.

In its new report, Boatman Capital Research claims that AVZ is "deliberately ousted from the Manono project"..."

Simon Congo is the Chinese called Cong Mao Huai, known as the owner of *Fleuve-Congo Hotel* in Kinshasa; owner or manager of SOPECO which manages the main tolls in the DRC; headliner of Dathomir (shareholder with Guy Loando Mboyo's family in *Dathcom Mining*) denounced in the IGF report on *Cominière SA*; headliner of mining companies *HongKong Excellen Mining Investment Congo* and *HongKong Yisen* (in which the name of Guy Loando was among the shareholders according to the documents consulted by the investigators), having benefited in an irregular and mysterious way from the mining permits of *Dathcom Mining* according to reports from the *General Inspectorate of Finance* (IGF) from 2022 and the *Superior Council of the Portfolio* from 2021, and other mining and various operational companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo. File to follow, file to read.

(A survey conducted by NGOs and Congolese Civil Society Platforms CDH, CERN/CENCO, ESPOIR ONGD, JUSTICIA, MAX IMPACT, LICOCO, POM, RCEN, RND,



Leaders - Au cœur de la bataille pour le contrôle du lithium de Manono...

Que veut en réalité l'entreprise chinoise Zijin chez la congolaise Cominière SA et chez Dathcom Mining

Below: Julien Paluku with former CCP Ambassador to the DRC Zhu Jing who has now been replaced by Zhao Bin



Winenut
Go AVZ!

Dave Evans said: 

19/02/2023

At the heart of the battle for control of Manono lithium by China in the Democratic Republic of Congo:

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Great post Dave

Clearly describes and enunciates the perverted, corrupted and criminal position that Zijin and it's accomplice Cominiere occupies in relation to Manono

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Everything from bluechips to specs

<https://dialogo-americas.com/articl...> tainted Argentine news site Infobae reported

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12/04/2024



Xerof

Have a Cigar 1975



Dave Evans

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Translated from French by
Slave workers at #ZIJIN ? Grumbles at #CARRILU , the ZIJIN group cement factory in Kolwezi, about working conditions worthy of a Stalinist gulag. Share massively to denounce the conditions of slavery in which the Congolese work.

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**Dave Evans**

Regular

May 13, 2024

🔗 #12

Zijin's Congo mine shipments returned due to radiation levels, ministry says

[Reuters](#) | April 22, 2024 | 12:11 pm

Zijin's operations in DRC

Mineral shipments from a Congolese copper and cobalt operation majority-owned by China's Zijin Mining Group Co. Ltd were returned due to overly high radiation levels, the Congolese mines minister said in a letter seen by *Reuters* on Monday.

The letter, dated April 12, informed the COMMUS project in which Zijin owns a 72% stake that the ministry [had suspended its](#) licence while it investigated the issue.

"I am informed of the return of your shipments that exported ... mineral products to South Africa on the grounds that their radioactivity content exceeds the regulatory threshold," Mines Minister Antoinette N'Samba Kalambayi said in the letter.

Zijin did not immediately respond to emailed questions. It was not possible to reach COMMUS for comment. The letter did not make clear what was in the shipments.

COMMUS, based near Democratic Republic of Congo's southern city of Kolwezi, produced 129,000 tonnes of copper and about 2,200 tons of cobalt in 2023, ministry data shows.

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investigation would take. These include verifying COMMUS' compliance with export procedures and assessing what risks the presence of radioactive materials might have posed to the export chain.

Congo is the world's third-largest copper producer and its top producer of cobalt, a key component in batteries for electric vehicles and mobile phones.

(By Ange Kasongo, Felix Njini and Alessandra Prentice; Editing by Alison Williams)



Zijin's Congo mine shipments returned due to radiation levels, ministry ...

Congolese mines minister suspended the copper and cobalt operation's licence while it investigated the issue.

www.mining.com

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May 23, 2024

#13

China Violates Human Rights in Peru



BY JULIETA PELCASTRE/DÍÁLOGO

FEBRUARY 07, 2010

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Peru fights for its economic, social, and cultural rights as it faces the disproportionate growth of Chinese companies.

Peruvian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expressed their concern about the growing economic influence and increasing participation of Chinese companies in Latin America. These companies consistently violate human rights, pollute waters and the region, and threaten the health and culture of indigenous populations, as they carry out extractive and energy projects and build infrastructure for their own benefit.

"They [Chinese companies and banks] behave unethically. We are fighting for our rights at the international level," Julia Cuadros, mining specialist and board member of the Peruvian NGO CooperAcción, told *Diálogo*. "They take advantage of the weak Peruvian legislation and violate rights that citizens are entitled to by law."

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a United Nations (UN) mechanism the Human Rights Council established in 2005. It conducts cyclic assessments of human rights issues in the organization's 193 member states.

"In November 2018, the UN sent its third UPR to the People's Republic of China. This review features specific recommendations and commitments to halt violations against human and environmental rights by private and public Chinese companies, especially those operating overseas," Cuadros said.

China is set to officially respond to the document in March 2019, but the Asian nation already warned that some recommendations won't be accepted unless they are aligned with their national policies. "Meanwhile, Chinese companies and banks violate the human rights of Peruvian and South American communities," Cuadros said.

"China sees us only as a source of natural resources," Nelly Ledezma, a specialist in labor law for Peru's mining and steel sectors, told *Diálogo*. "It has a voracious appetite for raw material."

The report

The International Federation for Human Rights and the Coalition for China's Investments and Funding in Latin America, along with 15 other South American NGOs, submitted a report in October 2018 titled, *The Civil Society's Evaluation of the Extraterritorial Obligations of the People's Republic of China: Case Studies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru*. The document shows 18 Chinese projects supported by 15 trusts and six banks from Asia. Seven of those projects are in the mining industry, six in the oil industry, and five in the hydroelectric sector.

The NGOs condemned four Chinese companies for violating human rights in Peru: Mineral and Metal Group in Apurímac, Chinalco in Junín, Shougang in Ica, and Zijin Mining Group in Río Blanco, Piura department. "We welcome foreign investment

The report concludes that the human rights violations by Chinese companies and financial organizations in the five countries are not isolated acts, but rather show a systematic pattern of labor, environmental, and cultural transgressions. It describes continuous violations that the Chinese government perpetrated with full awareness, as well as a lack of monitoring and effective measures to comply with extraterritorial obligations in its international commitments.

In November 2018, Amnesty International published the report, China: Human Right Violations in the Name of National Security. The report asserts that the Asian power restricts certain liberties at home, such as speech, free association and peaceful assembly, religion and creed, fair trial, non-refoulement, no arbitrary detention, and no discrimination.

"An official commitment from the Chinese government is unlikely as long as they violate their own population's rights," Ledezma said. "In its quest to relocate its production and crown itself a world power, China attempts to impose a 19th century type of industrial development in Peru and South America, through cruel and exploitative practices."

The Peruvian case

The Peruvian Ministry of Energy and Mining told the press that more than 20 percent of mining investments in the country are Chinese and worth \$11.7 billion. China is Peru's main commercial partner and main buyer of minerals, such as copper, iron, and gold. "Additionally, China participates in the energy and strategic infrastructure sector in Peru," Juan Carlos Mathews, vice-president of the World Trade Center Lima, told Diálogo. "In the next three years, the Chinese will invest \$10 billion in those sectors."

The October 2018 report states that the largest mining project in the Andean nation, Las Bambas MMG, located in the Apurímac region, transports 370 daily truckloads of minerals and chemicals since 2015, with adverse health consequences for 18 rural communities along the trucks' path. Chinalco, which leads the Toromocho project in Junín region, relocated the Morococha population to a humid seismic area with unsanitary conditions. Locals, especially children, are always sick because of the humidity.

In Ecuador and Bolivia, mining projects have forcefully displaced many indigenous communities. In Chile, hydroelectric projects will affect the archaeological and cultural patrimony of Mapuche communities in Araucanía. In Belo Monte, Brazil, a hydroelectric plant affected local communities' hunting and fishing mechanisms.

Cuadros and Mathews agree that the Peruvian case is critical due to the major impact of Chinese investment on rural communities. The lack of response and rather uncooperative stance of Asian companies and financial institutions, considering the

should not only guarantee communities' rights, but also meet their obligations, because non-compliance combined with corruption leads to deficiencies and conflict," said Mathews. "China's government should be accountable for the actions of Chinese companies in our countries," Cuadros concluded.



China Violates Human Rights in Peru - Diálogo Américas

Peru fights for its economic, social, and cultural rights as it faces the disproportionate growth of Chinese companies. Peruvian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expressed their concern about the growing economic influence and increasing participation of Chinese companies in Latin America...

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Dave Evans

Regular

May 24, 2024

#14

Zijin's poisoned legacy

A toxic spill last year blackened the name of Chinese metals giant Zijin Mining. But, in Fujian, its broken promises and environmental failures have a longer history, writes Yang Chuanmin, joint winner of the in-depth reporting category at the 2011 China Environmental Press Awards.

[Yang Chuanmin](#)

April 13, 2011

A serious pollution incident at a Zijin Mining copper mine in July 2010, sent shockwaves across China. Forty days later, Southern Metropolis Daily reporter Yang Chuanmin travelled to Fujian province to investigate the local impact of the company's operations. There, she found a legacy of ill-health, polluted land and broken promises. This report is the joint winner of the in-depth reporting category at the China Environmental Press Awards, 2011, run by chinadialogue and The Guardian.

Even on the hottest summer days, few women wear skirts in Bitian village. They do not want to expose their feet, which are covered with festering blisters from the water of the Ting River.

The pollution disaster here, in Fujian province, eastern China, has brought Zijin Mountain into the public eye. Before July, 2010, the metals giant that runs the pits here – Zijin Mining – was upheld as an example of "double excellence": bringing both economic benefit and environmental protection.

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village authorities, more than 200 of the 305 families here have to walk down a very long road every day to collect mountain water. One villager, Zhong Sanlian, allowed me to see her sore-covered feet. After she washes her clothes in the river water, she said, her feet swell up for several days and itch painfully.

The village secretary, Huang Jingxin, said: "Your hands start to itch as soon as you come into contact with the river water." Even the colour of the Ting River scares them. When there is no wind or rain the water is green. But when it rains heavily, sediment from the bottom of the river is brought up and the water turns into a rusty sunset colour.

Losses to the downstream fishing industry have already been calculated. However, damage caused in the immediate area as a result of July's disaster has not yet been evaluated.

The villagers said that all the fish in the river have been killed off. River life has always been a source of pride for the people here. Turtles used to sell for more than 70 yuan (US\$10.7) per jin (around half a kilo). They also used to catch grouper, beard fish and eels, which had sweet and tender meat, like tofu. July was the last time anyone here caught a fish more than half a metre in length. That fish died quickly and a group of the villagers bravely ate it together. Among them was 30 year-old Bi Bosheng, who works at the neighbouring Wuping Zijin mine, in a shaft over 400 metres deep. He has a different take on life and death to most: more and more people dare not eat anything from the river. Another villager, Huang Lihua, suspects it is as dangerous as taking poison.

Even now, Bitian has not posted a report on local water quality. It's as if the pollution incident had nothing to do with this village. Nobody has raised the issue of compensation or how to deal with drinking-water problems. The only comment has come from the Dahang County TV station, which has been broadcasting daily since the beginning of August that Ting River water is meeting quality standards on every count.

Local people are too scared to eat the fish here, but the results of official laboratory tests have "confirmed" that Ting River water is meeting standards. The results were posted on a bulletin board on Jiangbin Road in Shanghang County.

According to inside sources, the former head of Shanghang County Environmental Protection Bureau has been removed from office. The new head, Li Yongtao, goes to Zijin Mountain for monitoring purposes every day. La Jilong, the head of the environmental monitoring station in Yongding County, which is situated downstream of Shanghang County, even told me that "already there are no traces of copper ions".

This does not calm the fears of the locals, however. Exasperated village head Zhong

has been resolved or not.”

Shadow of cancer

The villagers here have long mistrusted the authorities. At the end of June and beginning of July, the river at the foot of Bitian village turned strange shades of blue and green, like synthetic colours in an oil painting. Every day, the villagers see the environment inspection vehicle come to the bridge at the entrance to the village to take water samples. They know something is wrong, but up until now nobody has explained to them what has happened.

According to China’s “Environmental Protection Law”, if there is a sudden incident in a company or government unit that could cause an environmental accident, then “the people who may come to harm as a result of the pollution must be informed in a timely fashion”. Zijin Mining clearly failed to comply with this.

The distrust goes further back than July, however. Villager Huang Lihua has not dared to drink the river water for several years. He has used several hundred metres of rubber tubing to divert mountain spring water from the other side of the mountain to his home. Three or four years ago, his cattle, which would frequently go down to the river to drink, became ill and died. He buried the cattle. He did not dare to eat or sell it.

Even without the impacts of July’s accident, Bitian is paying a price for the mining operations on Zijin Mountain. The mountain lies to the north-east of the village. When it is windy, ore residue fills the air. On bad days, even the houses on Zijin Mountain are hard to see. Since the beginning of this century, when the peak of Zijin Mountain was blasted for mining, the environment of Bitian village has steadily deteriorated.

Last year, Zijin Mining gave Bitian village a subsidy to establish a running water supply. However, this year water samples from the village were sent for laboratory testing and the water quality found to be sub-standard. The villagers said they now use it to flush their toilets. Huang Lihua said: “The water from the Ting River used to be delicious, but now we don’t dare to drink it”. Villagers with enough money buy clean drinking water like city people.

What really frustrates the people of Bitian is that, apart from the pollution, Zijin Mining hasn’t brought them anything: there have been no benefits for the villagers and gaining work at the company is not an easy task.

This cannot be counted as a poor village. At the beginning of the 1990s, many people bought shares in Zijin Mining and made some money. But those with funds have moved away. Zhong Wenfang, the village head, said that the people still there are those with no alternative

Most of the older Bitian villagers know Zijin Mining's chairman, Chen Jinghe, who as a young man used to climb Zijin Mountain in the day and, in the evening, eat his dinner at the Bitian village hall. And so, for the past two months, a group of village bigwigs have been going to Zijin's offices to try to speak with Chen. Zijin Mining has, in response, promised to resolve their drinking water problems, but still nothing has been done.

The relationship between Zijin Mining and the Shanghang county government is set out in the company prospectus. In the last restructuring, Zijin Mining changed from a state-owned enterprise to a modern shareholder-owned enterprise. However, the largest shareholder is still the Shanghang county government. Many government officials have positions in Zijin Mining and these posts have been disclosed to the media.

There are pressures from both above and below. Zhong Wenfang said that he finds being a village cadre is too difficult: "Every day, villagers express their opinions to the village committee, saying, 'The air is so terrible! You need to resolve the drinking water issue!'"

The Ting River was originally the life-source of the Hakka people. Now, it has become a burden. Downstream from Bitian, Jiantou village stretches for three kilometres. Here, each household has a well by the river to draw water. The wells are all 20 to 30 years old, but have been abandoned in the last few years – nobody dares to drink the water now.

Ten days ago, another esophageal cancer patient from Bitian died. According to local medical statistics, of 40 people to contract cancer in the village in the past 10 years, 35 have died. Most of them lived in the village closest to Zijin Mountain. The village secretary Huang Jingxin told me that these statistics are "very accurate" and that most of those who died suffered from esophageal cancer, lung cancer and stomach cancer.

Many of them went to Beijing and Shanghai for treatment, plunging their families into debt. Ten years ago, there were almost no cancer patients in the village.

The Ministry of Health has not published the rate of cancer in China. However, according to statistics produced at the fifth China Oncology conference in 2008, over the past 20 years China's cancer rate has been between 1% and 1.5%. The cancer rate in Bitian village is three times higher than this and, in the village closest to the mine, it is almost 10 times higher. The villagers say that, before mining started here, cancer was very rare, but since the mining began "most of the deaths have been caused by cancer".

Evolution of a crisis

Mountain to the Mianhuatan River, has not happened overnight. And alongside this gradual process, mining expansion has continued at an alarming rate.

The Zijin Mountain goldmine started operating in 1993, kick starting the area's industrial development. By 2000, full-scale open pit mining was under way. The Zijin Mountain peak was leveled and turned into a natural workshop for heap leaching and hydrometallurgy. Before this, open-air heap leaching had rarely been practised in southern China. In various interviews, Zijin chairman Chen Jinghe rejected the view of industry experts that "the south is too humid and rainy for heap leaching and the situation of Zijin Mountain does not lend itself well to this mining process."

The rapid rise of Zijin Mining is proof of the potential for mining low-grade ore. Once, the Zijin gold mine was considered a hard and "tasteless" nut. In normal circumstances, one tonne of ore would need to contain three grams or more of gold before being considered for industrial ore mining. However, most of the ore from Zijin's mine contains less than one gram of gold per tonne, making low-cost heap leaching a good solution.

Today Zijin Mining's vice-president, Liu Rongchun was manager of mine technology when the company was founded in 1993. In interview with *Southern Metropolis Daily*, he said that heap leaching in southern China was absolutely doable as long as you choose an appropriate site and protect against waste-water seepage. He said Zijin was using the process to turn something small into something great, and that environmental protection was at the heart of the company's ethos.

Why is environmental protection management so important in heap leaching, even though the process uses known materials?

First, an important material used in heap leaching is sodium cyanide, which is a highly toxic substance. Second, it produces a huge amount of waste: one tonne of ore could contain as little as one gram of usable metal. Handling the waste is more challenging than the core extraction process.

In 2006, *Mining Technology* magazine published the article "Zijin mining: exploitation of low-grade and refractory metallurgical mineral resources", the result of a collaboration between Changchun Gold Research Institute and researchers from Zijin Mining. It mentions that, "Heap leaching of gold is a simple, low-cost method that uses limited mineral processing equipment. Only these methods of mineral processing, namely open-pit mining and carbon in heap leaching methods + (fine ore cyanide carbon) are capable of expanding production capacity, reducing operating costs and increasing dressing and smelting recovery rates, in order to expand gold production, increase enterprise profits, lower tailing grades and selected ore grades."

Heap leaching resolves the cost issues associated with low-grade mineral mining

Mountain over the last 10 years. From an initial 10 kilograms, the figure had risen to 11.5 tonnes by 2006, a one thousand-fold increase. In close to two years, Zijin Mountain produced around 80 tonnes of gold, making it China's largest gold mine. The advent of open-air heap leaching allowed production capacity to expand. Meanwhile, the situation in Bitian village gets worse year by year. The village head, Zhong Wenfang said: "I used to think the Ting River was really wide, I never dreamed of ever expanding mines".

Leaks in leaching

The wet copper smelter that caused July's pollution leak employed the same principles as heap leaching. The copper is located below the layer of gold. Only in the last couple of years has Zijin started to extract it.

This wet smelting technology, jointly developed by Zijin Mining and the Beijing General Research Institute for Metals, was given an award by the China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association and the Gold Association. A researcher from the institute told me that wet copper smelting is a mature technology internationally and the greatest advantage is that you can use low-grade copper. Zijin Mountain is also the first large-scale mine in China to use hydrometallurgy to mine ore. Vice-president Liu Rongchun said this technology has been researched for 10 years and practiced for five. Twenty percent of the world's copper is produced using bio-hydrometallurgical processes, which can raise the rate of resource utilisation.

In fact, if we look to the past, it is a miracle that Zijin Mountain copper is used at all. According to data provided by Zijin Mining, its average copper content is 0.38 grams per tonne. That is to say, from one tonne of ore, only 0.38 grams of copper is extracted, and the remainder is considered waste.

China has large quantities of poor-quality ore. Zijin Mining provides a route to low-cost exploitation, and its industry reputation is based on the model "benefit the country, benefit the people and benefit the self".

Previously, Zijin Mining repeatedly stated that hydrometallurgy is a closed process, and there is no possibility of waste-water containing copper efflux. However, a survey of the literature revealed that, within the hydrometallurgical process, and considering the particular characteristics of Zijin Mountain ore, there can also be simultaneous leaching of iron and arsenic. These heavy chemicals can accumulate in the leaching solution and reduce production efficiency. During the production process, these byproducts must be carefully managed.

Liu Rongchun has confirmed this with *Southern Metropolis Daily*. He explained that the company has three safeguards to prevent leaks during the leaching process. First, it secures a mat beneath the ore stockpile during heap leaching to prevent seepage. Second, it creates seepage-collection wells to collect any solution that

everything is perfectly safe, the Environmental Protection Bureau of Shanghang County has installed an independent water-quality monitoring device downstream of Zijin Mining's waste-water discharge point.

According to the Environmental Protection Bureau, the pollution accident at the beginning of July was caused by the simultaneous failure of all three safeguards. The seepage collection wells and spillways were "illegally" kept open; however the findings of the investigation did not clarify if the accident was based on subjective intent or an accident.

Liu Rongchun said: "On the macro scale, we are very good – but the problems were unexpectedly caused by small details. This is a profound lesson, reflecting failures of management."

Bigger mine, worse pollution

Across the world, hidden behind the wealth created by the mining industry, are problems requiring attention – and those most in need are the villages closest to the mines. Unfortunately, amid China's rapid development, these places are still neglected for various reasons.

Less than a kilometre from Zijin Mountain, in neighbouring Wuping county, is Yueyangpian village. The metals found here are mainly silver and copper, but there is also gold, lead, zinc, gallium, bismuth and sulphur – all associated with large-scale deposits of silver polymetallic ore. But the mine set up to exploit these resources has also brought environmental disaster for local residents: as the wealth from mine amasses, the state of the village gradually worsens.

This mine was first set up in the 1990s and jointly operated by Sanxin Mining and Ronghe Mining. Their activities cut off groundwater supplies and some of the village farmland could not be irrigated. A government document shows that, at the beginning of 2007, this mine in Wuping County was transferred from Ronghe Mining directly to Zijin Mining by "principle leaders of the county committee of the county government and under the efforts of the Land and Resources Bureau" and established as Wuping Zijin. Wuping Zijin became a subsidiary of Zijin Mining Group. According to a 2008 security bulletin published by the company, Zijin Mining owns 77.5% of Wuping Zijin. Wuping county is the second largest shareholder. In a later, expanded version of the environmental impact assessment, the mine was described as showing poor economic returns and having safety issues, including tailings hazardous to downstream villages and the Ting River. "Therefore, the best way is for a strong enterprise to lead exploitation," it said.

Liu Rongchun recalls that Wuping County was not completely comfortable with this mine. As a result, Zijin Mining put in place a careful management plan, improved the rate of resource utilisation and standardised safety and environmental protection.

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In the second year after the take-over, Wuping Zijin put forward plans to expand capacity to "daily processing of 2,000 tonnes of ore". Wuping county government is the second largest shareholder in the mine. The expansion plans fell under the supervision of Wuping county deputy magistrate Wang Yunchuan. Zijin Mining completed its expansion within one year.

The environmental impact assessment conducted by the Sanming city Environmental Protection Science Research Unit indicated that the biggest source of pollution was the waste-water emitted from tailings, most of which ended up in the Ting River. But it was confident this problem would be dealt with: "The expansion project will impose restrictions on volume of waste-water emitted. Most people in a public survey approved of Zijin's acquisition and expansion," the report said.

However, *Southern Metropolis Daily's* investigations show that this was not the case. After the expansion was completed, pollution was not reduced in line with Zijin's promises.

The new tailings storage facility for the mine in Yueyongpian has been designed to sit on a high slope, and so the water level is higher than most of the village's buildings. Yueyongpian is made up of three administrative units, including Yueyong village. Their water source is badly polluted. Many villagers told me that the most serious groundwater pollution began the year before last, after the tailings-storage facility was expanded.

The villagers of Yueyongpian cannot drink the water from old wells, which were in use for several decades; neither can they drink the water from wells dug by individual households.

The villagers showed me a pot of boiled well water. On the side there was a thick yellow layer of dirt and it tasted salty "Before there was any mining, the water was very clear and sweet," said one old villager, Zhou Rencheng. "Now, after one night, the water gets rusty and tastes foul."

The farmland is also badly polluted. In the 1950s, a set of small reservoirs were set up for irrigation and the water was diverted to the rice paddies with water pipes. After the reservoirs became polluted, the earth on the fields turned black and smelly. The rice takes longer to grow and the crop is stunted. When the villagers go down to the fields, they wear rain boots. If they work barefoot, then their feet will rot.

Wuping Zijin has received little attention in comparison with Shanghang Zijin, even though they are only separated by a mountain. The villagers showed me some photographs. When the national press rushed to Shanghang county for interviews, the forked road to Wuping Zijin was blocked by a rock

When I asked Zijin Mining about the current status of Wuping Zijin's many metal mines, the response was: "There has been no pollution of the Ting River, or in the surrounding areas." Vice president Liu Rongchun added: "Of course, development has an effect on its surroundings, however so far this has been within an acceptable extent." Liu Rongchun said that each mine is assessed before acquisition.

However, this assessment is not satisfactory. In 2009, a group from Yueyongpian village formed to put forward their misgivings about the mine and representatives of Wuping County came to the village for a meeting. The village team leader and village cadres also took part.

The people all said that the water tasted bad. But the conclusion reached by the county cadres was that there was nothing wrong with the water and it was drinkable. To this day, the villagers have still not seen a public report on water-quality testing done by the Environmental Protection Bureau.

Green farms to stagnant water

Not far from the expanded mine are villagers whose existence and environment are coming under increasing pressure. At Yueyang, just a fraction of the village's original lands are still capable of supporting a farming lifestyle.

Work in the mines is also very dangerous. Gold and silver are toxic materials. Every villager knows this. Zhou Yonghong, a 42-year old local, worked at a small, private mine nearby. One day, he lost his footing and fell into the cyanide pool. He died on his way to hospital. The mine paid out compensation.

When Zijin Mining built the tailings-storage facility at Yueyong, it attracted strong opposition from local villagers. Then they built a tailings dam for Wuping Zijin. This was the fourth time that they requisitioned land during this period and the price on offer had risen – from 12,000 yuan per *mu* (around 667 square metres) to 25,000 yuan per *mu*.

At that time, villager Lin Meiyong still owned seven plots of land. When land for the dam was being requisitioned, the county and town sent workers to her home every day. She did not let them in.

But her brother-in-law, a teacher at a middle school in Wuping, was told he would be fired if his older brother and wife didn't agree to sell their land and so she gave in. When she went to town to have the sale certified, she stopped to apply for work in the mine as, along with her land, she had lost her source of income. But Wuping Zijin told her that, at 44 years old, she was too old for the work.

The 100 *mu* of farmland here has turned into the biggest source of pollution in the village. At the entry port to the tailings-storage facility, there is a large sign saying:

But, in reality, the villagers have not all moved away and the tailings storage facility is already in use. Hu Biaoyang even lives within the facility's grounds. According to company plans, his house will eventually be submerged. But Hu doesn't have anywhere to build a new house and doesn't want to move, and so he has made two demands: the first is that the facility will not affect his current standard of living and the second is that, once the land is requisitioned, his future living will be safeguarded.

Hu Biaoyang does not have any relatives who are teachers or civil servants and the two sides are at a stalemate. From time to time, workers come and try to persuade him to give up, saying that Wuping Zijin is a state-owned company, the backbone of Wuping and the area's biggest taxpayer.

Hu Biaoyang has kept some pictures of the site of the tailings-storage facility before it was flooded: a green rice field in the summer and yellow withered stalks after the winter reaping. Now it is just stagnant water; even the mosquitoes avoid it. Some villagers' graves were not moved in time and have also been submerged under the reservoir. The wells in front of the houses are gone too and the reservoir water will soon flood his house.

During my visit, the villagers looked out on this stagnant water in consternation. They still remember their feelings of reluctance about the project. They have filmed the farmland and made dvds as something to remember their home by. But they also know that, even if the water receded, the fields could not be cultivated.

Cancer patients

For fish farms downstream, pollution from mining means economic losses. For the villagers of Yueyang and Bitian, meanwhile, it is a challenge to their basic right to life.

Even small-scale mining can produce serious pollution. The people of Yueyang told me that, for half an hour every day, their village is enveloped in acrid smoke from the privately owned Jinshi mine nearby.

Ten years of mining has turned Yueyang into a "cancer village". There are more than 3,000 people living in the three administrative villages of the Yueyang area.

In the past five years, about 60 to 70 cancer patients have died in these villages, many of them married couples or siblings. The youngest cancer patient is only 18 years old. *Southern Metropolis Daily* obtained a detailed case list. The most common causes of death were stomach cancer, lung cancer, esophageal cancer and liver cancer.

respectively. Last year, their sister was diagnosed with leukemia.

Guan Zhongwen and Lin Jindi were a married couple. Guan died of stomach and liver cancer and Lin breast cancer. Their only child was orphaned. Zhou Renxi and Qiu Yongzhao, also a couple, were both killed by cancer.

Lin Meiyong's father, Lin Zhanqin, his sister's parents-in-law, Zhong Xiuqi and Wen Dengchun, and his father's older brother – all of them died of cancer. The villagers have received no compensation: it is very difficult to prove the connection between cancer rates and environmental degradation, and difficult too to determine where the main responsibility lies, as the mine has been operated by three mining enterprises.

Twenty year-old Zhou Meifang grew up on this land. At 18, she went to medical school in the city. Last year, when she returned to Wuping for National Day, she fell ill and was diagnosed with leukemia at the local hospital, which sent her to Fuzhou for treatment. Three weeks later, she died. Her mother did everything she could, borrowing 20,000 yuan (US\$3,000) from family and friends for treatment, but the doctors were unable to save her. Steeped in debt, her family faces a troubled future.

The villagers from Yueyang even envy villagers elsewhere who have lost their land. Those living under the shadow of cancer are not able to seek compensation. And, as much as they want to move away from their polluted homesteads, they have nowhere to go.

Yang Chuanmin is a reporter at Southern Metropolis Daily, and joint winner of the in-depth reporting category at the 2011 China Environmental Press Awards.

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Homepage image from Southern Metropolis Daily shows the impact of Zijin's toxic spill in July 2010.

Zijin's poisoned legacy

A toxic spill last year blackened the name of Chinese metals giant Zijin Mining. But, in Fujian, its broken promises and environmental failures have a longer history, writes Yang Chuanmin, joint winner of the in-depth reporting category at the 2011 China Environmental Press Awards.

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Mine in 'world cobalt capital' displaces locals and monks under questionable circumstances

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by [Didier Makal](#), [Eric Cibamba](#) on 23 October 2023 | Translated by [Cait Fahy](#)

- *Local residents living in the DRC's 'cobalt capital of the world' are being forced to relocate in order to make way for a mine owned by Chinese company COMMUS (Compagnie miniere de Musonie).*
- *The relocation process is being done under questionable circumstances, including providing compensation payments under the table which don't always meet amounts needed to buy a decent home, contradictory statements, lack of consultation, and few traces of written documentation to fact-check claims made by local government officials, the mining company and displaced people.*
- *The demand for cobalt, a critical mineral for the clean energy transition, is expected to increase and lead to the eviction of communities who find themselves living above their deposits, say energy experts.*
- *The mining company's lawyer says the relocation process is happening fairly, payments are calculated alongside officials and civil society groups, and the land and buildings, like schools, rather belong to the company's owners.*

This report was produced with the support of the [Rainforest Investigations Network](#) in partnership with the [Pulitzer Center](#).

LUBUMBASHI — In Kolwezi, the self-proclaimed cobalt capital of the world, 400 households and a monastery are preparing to leave. Recently in 2022, one area, known as the Gécamines neighborhood, saw 40% of the land become a cobalt and copper mining quarry with 209 households leaving in a controversial relocation process.

A symbol of this controversy, Adelard Makonga refused to pack his bags and rather stayed put in his home. He demanded a "legal relocation process," upping the ante against the Chinese mining company COMMUS (Compagnie miniere de Musonie) which only agreed to cash compensations — avoiding the long relocation process called for in Congolese law.

"I'm not asking much from COMMUS. All I want is to be resettled in the same conditions as here," Makonga declared on local television in May 2023, a month before his death.

According to the law, companies seeking to displace locals are called to find a new location for the home, provide the same sized housing as the original homes, and assist with the moving process.

For displaced people like Makonga, leaving Gécamines is also difficult. It is one of the few areas in the region with safe modern roads, running water and stable electricity. It has some of the best infrastructure in Kolwezi, the second biggest city in the Katanga region, in southeastern DRC.

Built at the start of the 1940s to house employees of a Congolese state company,

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Gécamines, the company, holds a minority stake in COMMUS while Zijin Mining Group Ltd, a Chinese mining company, holds the majority of shares.

Due to the global clean energy transition and the electrification of transport, the demand for critical minerals such as copper or cobalt for manufacturing lithium-ion batteries is expected to [increase](#), according to the International Energy Agency. About [three-quarters](#) of the world's cobalt supply comes from the DRC. The Kolwezi mine has an annual production capacity of [120,000 tonnes](#) of copper and [3,000 tonnes](#) of cobalt.

Many African civil society organizations [fear](#) that, far from benefiting from their mineral wealth, communities that hold reserves of critical minerals will pay the highest price for their extraction — in the form of evictions. However in Kolwezi, this is already a reality.

In 2022, 40% of the Gécamines district was taken over by a cobalt and copper mining quarry and 209 households left in a controversial relocation process. Image by Eric Cibamba.

Insufficient relocation compensation

The \$25,000 offered for each household to relocate is not enough to buy or build another house, which can cost anywhere between \$40,000 and \$100,000, according to protesters featured in local media. This amount, however, has not been confirmed by other sources.

COMMUS has proposed “an average of \$80,000” offer per household, according to their lawyer; including in it the value of the plot, the house and the furniture.


The discrepancy in reported figures is evidence of the lack of transparency, files and receipts created in the process, on the part of multiple parties: local government, the mining company and displaced people. A local government official who wishes to remain anonymous, stated, without evidence, that COMMUS paid some residents up to \$100,000.

On Makonga's part, he waited in his house surrounded by the wall that limits the COMMUS mine until a payment agreement of \$90,000 was reached. He only received \$3,000 to organize his move, a condition he had to meet before the mining company would pay the remainder. But Makonga died in his home on June 3, 2023, and his wife and six children, who remained in the half-destroyed house due to mining activities in the nearby quarry, are frightened about the uncertain cause of Makonga's death.

rights, assures Jean-Pierre Kalenga, the relocation commission president and Lualaba local government commissioner in charge of land affairs.

"We regret his death. However, the commission did everything to ensure that his situation was resolved," he remarked.

In its September 2023 [report](#), Amnesty International reported that local authorities did not organize real public consultations or consider evicted peoples' complaints. According to the report, they requested fair compensation payments in writing, which would take into account the true value of the properties they were forced to leave. The Chinese mining company has also not published an environmental impact report, as required by law.

 Makonga (in blue), who died in June this year, walking among the rubble of his former home.

Makonga (in blue), who died in June this year, walking among the rubble of his former home. Image by Eric Cibamba.

Despite the dispute, COMMUS' lawyer still reports that "the relocation is going well." The payments made to former residents, Patrick Ilunga explains to Mongabay, came "after the investigation conducted by the relocation commission, which included government officials and civil society groups."


During the 2010s, Gécamines, the neighborhood, had an estimated population of 38,000 people, including Gécamines mining employees who received exclusive rights to the houses they occupied. Today, the district population has been reduced by approximately 2,000 inhabitants.

Settling into new neighborhoods proves difficult

While COMMUS and the relocation commission are satisfied with their work, some displaced people, like Edmond Chansa, 60, are not satisfied with their new living arrangements. He now lives in an unfinished house in Joli-Site on the eastern outskirts of Kolwezi and lacks several basic services. He says that COMMUS and the relocation commission denied their resettlement request.

"It was an outright refusal. We were paid to leave, and the arbitrary amount of money we were paid was chosen without consulting us," explains Chansa. He used his \$70,000 payment to buy land and build a house, which he is now struggling to complete with the rest of the funds.

"We have no electricity or water here. I have to spend 2,500 Congolese francs [around \$1] per day for 10 containers of water, while in Gécamines water is easily available," complains Chansa.

 While COMMUS and the relocation commission are happy with the new development, one local 60-year-old is not satisfied with his new living

While COMMUS and the relocation commission are happy with the new development, one local 60-year-old is not satisfied with his new living arrangements. Image by Eric Cibamba.

Abandoning the noise, air pollution

But Céline Lenge, a 58-year-old mother of eight children, plans to leave the area and is awaiting relocation. She has lived about 100 meters (328 feet) from the boundary separating residential areas from COMMUS since she was 17. Life near the mining quarry is punctuated by permanent environmental disturbances: dust, earthquakes and collapsing or cracking walls.

COMMUS has built a wall limiting quarry access in a bid to prevent pollution.

Kolwezi saw another wall emerge, one in 2017 in Kasulo, where the Chinese company Congo Dongfang International Mining (CDM) bought an artisanal quarry in the middle of Kasulo and displaced 600 families. Similarly, the wall was not enough to limit air pollution caused by quarry dust. Destroyed private buildings are also generally not accounted for.

Building walls is not enough, according to local Lualaba leader Schadrack Mukad. He is calling for all displaced people exposed to these dangers to be rehomed safely as Gécamines and Musonoie can no longer guarantee the right to a healthy environment. Common problems in these areas include; pollution and noise from mining explosions, atmospheric pollution caused by rock explosions releasing dust, and damage to homes.

"Residents do not risk staying outside or hanging their clothes out to dry," explains Schadrack Mukad. Moreover, he indicates, "the water table in the Gécamines and Musonoie districts has gotten so deep that you have to go 100 or 150 meters [328 to 492 feet] down to find water."

Geologist Jean-Pierre Kamb says that this pollution exposure is no longer just a small matter of concern. "It's not just baseless fears. This is real damage that is being done, even to those not working in the mining sector."

It is still uncertain if the residents will be relocated or if they will receive compensation, although some, like Céline Lenge, are clearly ready to leave.



Life near the mining quarry is punctuated by permanent environmental disturbances: dust, earthquakes and collapsing or cracking walls.

Life near the mining quarry is punctuated by permanent environmental disturbances: dust, earthquakes and collapsing or cracking walls. Image by Eric Cibamba

The nearby mining quarry has also disrupted childrens' education and threatens a local hospital. Having already lost one school, some kids cross over an old, dangerous quarry to attend another in the neighboring town of Musonoie. Masega primary school, for example, was neither spared from mining damage nor relocated elsewhere. Here, time stood still on November 11, 2021. Poignantly, on a blackboard in the 5th grade classroom, the last grammar lesson focused on the French conjugation of the verb "to finish."

Close to the current limit of the mine, the Gécamines-owned HPK hospital, is also at risk and could disappear.

Approached for a comment, COMMUS lawyer Patrick Ilunga responded to criticism about destroyed infrastructure used by the public: "The destroyed schools belong to Gécamines and if anyone should care it is neither us, COMMUS, nor you, journalists. Only Gécamines, COMMUS' boss, should be worrying about it."

Lualaba local land official, Jean-Pierre Kalenga, also remains vague: "my role is to ensure that the relocation conditions have been respected."

Contradictory plans all 'in progress'

About ten kilometers (about 6 miles) from Kolwezi's commercial center is the village of Tshabula, a quiet and peaceful area until COMMUS' arrival in 2015. The village was previously known for monks training in its Salvatorian Catholic monastery. In total, about 400 households are affected by mining plans, and waiting for relocation payments is proving stressful.

"Once everyone gets their money, we can go and build our new village," explains the Tshabula leader. This plan, however, is contradicted by what officials of the mining company have in mind.

"We are going to build Tshabula 2, although most people in Tshabula want compensation payments," observed COMMUS lawyer Patrick Ilunga.

COMMUS' mining activity is continuing apace, notes the president of the relocation commission, Jean-Pierre Kalenga. The two factors combined, speed and contradictory approaches, is leading to an unconcerned approach to the relocation process. This is all the more so because, to date, no one has indicated precisely where Tshabula 2 will be built and how. Everything still seems to be "in progress."

"We want relocation to be done better in Tshabula. COMMUS will have to set up [Tshabula] somewhere else," commented Mr. Kalenga.



In total, about 400 households are affected by mining plans, and waiting for relocation payments is proving stressful.

In total, about 400 households are affected by mining plans, and waiting for

This vagueness, however, seems to suit some residents, including those coming from Kolwezi. People are quickly moving in to newly built houses in Tshabula. The strategy is building “big, beautiful, sustainable” houses in the village, in order to receive higher relocation compensation when they have to leave, says an anonymous local government official.

Moving the Salvatorian monks, who have lived in large buildings in Tshabula since the 1980s, seems to be the most controversial relocation in the region. It is a significant investment, and the issue can sometimes strain relations due to agreements between the Congolese state and the Vatican on the church’s heritage.

“My responsibility is to support the relocation. I am not the one who takes care of the archiving or discusses what will become of the Monastery. I am not even from the ministry of mines which take precedence over land in the event of conflicts,” replied Jean-Pierre Kalenga. It is, however, up to the same state the land commissioner represents that is responsible for dealing with cultural or religious aspects. The monks have declined to comment on the relocation process.

Mine in ‘world cobalt capital’ displaces locals and monks under questionable ci...

This report was produced with the support of the Rainforest Investigations Network in partnership with the Pulitzer Center. LUBUMBASHI — In Kolwezi, the self-proclaimed cobalt capital of the world, 400 households and a monastery are preparing to leave. Recently in 2022, one area, known as the...
news.mongabay.com

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12/09/2023

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Industrial mining of cobalt and copper for rechargeable batteries is leading to grievous human rights abuses

The expansion of industrial-scale cobalt and copper mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has led to the forced eviction of entire communities and grievous human rights abuses including sexual assault, arson and beatings. In a report, [Powering Change or Business as Usual?](#), Amnesty International and the DRC-based organisation Initiative pour la Bonne Gouvernance et les Droits Humains (IBGDH), detail how the scramble by multinational companies to expand mining operations has resulted in communities being forced from their homes and

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The forced evictions taking place as companies seek to expand industrial-scale copper and cobalt mining projects are wrecking lives and must stop now.

Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General

"The forced evictions taking place as companies seek to expand industrial-scale copper and cobalt mining projects are wrecking lives and must stop now," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

"Amnesty International recognizes the vital function of rechargeable batteries in the [energy transition](#) from fossil fuels. But [climate justice demands a just transition](#)."

Decarbonizing the global economy must not lead to further human rights violations. "The people of the DRC experienced significant exploitation and abuse during the colonial and post-colonial era, and their rights are still being sacrificed as the wealth around them is stripped away."

Growing demand for so-called clean energy technologies has created a corresponding demand for certain metals, including copper, and cobalt, which is essential for making most lithium-ion batteries. These are used to power a wide range of devices including electric cars and mobile phones. The DRC has the world's largest reserves of cobalt, and the seventh largest reserves of copper.

The average electric vehicle battery requires more than 13kg of cobalt, and a mobile phone battery about 7g. Demand for cobalt is expected to reach 222,000 tonnes by 2025, having tripled since 2010.

Donat Kambola, president of IBGDH, said: "People are being forcibly evicted, or threatened or intimidated into leaving their homes, or misled into consenting to derisory settlements. Often there was no grievance mechanism, accountability, or access to justice."

Candy Ofime and Jean-Mobert Senga, Amnesty International researchers and co-authors of the report, said: "We found repeated breaches of legal safeguards prescribed in international human rights law and standards, and national legislation, as well as blatant disregard for the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights."

To produce [Powering Change or Business as Usual?](#) Amnesty International and IBGDH interviewed more than 130 people at six different mining projects in and around the city of Kolwezi, in the southern province of Lualaba, during two separate visits in 2022.

Researchers reviewed documents and correspondence, photographs, videos, satellite images and company responses. Findings at four sites are included in the report and abuses at three sites, involving forced evictions, are recounted below. At the fourth site, Kamoa-Kakula, the report found evidence of inadequate


 A long conveyor belt carrying large blue green chunks of raw cobalt.

© Samir Tounsi / AFP via Getty Images

Cobalt being processed at a plant in the DRC

END FORCED EVICTIONS IN KOLWEZI

Send a message to President Tshisekedi to end forced evictions and other human rights abuses at copper and cobalt mines.

 A woman points upwards at a large crack in the wall of her house

© Amnesty International (Jean-Mobert Senga)

Cécile Isaka showing crack in her house caused by the activities of the Kolwezi copper and cobalt mine operated by COMMUS, February 2022

Homes demolished as a mine expands into a city

In the heart of the city of Kolwezi long-established communities have been destroyed since a vast open-pit copper and cobalt mine was reopened in 2015.

The project is operated by Compagnie Minière de Musonoie Global SAS (COMMUS), a joint venture between Zijin Mining Group Ltd, a Chinese company, and Générale des Carrières et des Mines SA (Gécamines), the DRC state mining company.

The affected neighbourhood of Cité Gécamines is home to about 39,000 people. The houses are typically multi-roomed and set in walled compounds with running water and electricity. There are schools and hospitals nearby.

We did not ask to be moved, the company and the government came and told us, 'There are minerals here.'

Edmond Musans

Since mining activities resumed, hundreds of residents have been told to leave, or have already had to move. Communities have not been adequately consulted and plans to expand the mine have not been made public. Some residents found out their houses were to be demolished only after red crosses appeared on their properties.

Edmond Musans, 62, who had to dismantle his home and leave, said: "We did not ask to be moved, the company and the government came and told us, 'There are minerals here.'"

equivalent homes. As a result many have had to move to properties without running water or reliable power on the outskirts of Kolwezi, experiencing a shocking fall in their standard of living. They have no effective means of appeal or redress.

One former resident said: "I had a large house, with electricity, water...Now, I have a small house that was all I could afford with the compensation...we have to drink water from wells ... almost no electricity."

Cécile Isaka, another former resident, said blasting to enlarge the mine caused cracks so large she feared her home would collapse. With no other viable option, she accepted the compensation offer and dismantled her damaged property in 2022 so she could reuse the bricks to rebuild elsewhere.

Edmond Musans helped form a committee to represent the interests of more than 200 households at risk of eviction, seeking higher compensation from COMMUS. The committee has shared its grievances with provincial authorities, to no avail. COMMUS told Amnesty International that it aimed to improve communication with stakeholders.



A child sits in the ruins of a house.

© Amnesty International (Candy Ofime)

A child in the compound of a home after it was marked for demolition to expand an energy transition mine, Kolwezi, DRC, September 2022



Piles of rubble from demolished houses.

© Amnesty International (Jean-Mobert Senga)

The remains of housing following evictions to expand an energy transition mine, Kolwezi, DRC, September 2022

Houses burned and residents injured

Near the site of the Mutoshi project, run by Chemicals of Africa SA (Chemaf), a subsidiary of Chemaf Resources Ltd., which is headquartered in Dubai, interviewees described how soldiers burned down a settlement called Mukumbi.

Ernest Miji, the local chief, said that in 2015, after Chemaf acquired the concession, three representatives of the company, accompanied by two police officers, came to tell him it was time for Mukumbi's residents to move away. He said the representatives visited four more times.

Recalling one of the visits, Kanini Maska, a former resident, said: "Chemaf's representative told us: 'You need to leave the village now.' We asked him: 'Where would we go? It is ... where we're raising our children, where we're farming land and where our kids are registered to go to school.'"

We had nothing to survive on, and spent nights in the forest.
Kanini Maska

Interviewees said soldiers of the Republican Guard, an elite military force, arrived one morning and began burning houses, and beat villagers who tried to stop them.

"We weren't able to retrieve anything," said Kanini Maska, 57. "We had nothing to survive on, and spent nights in the forest."

One girl, who was two at the time and we have chosen not to name, was severely burned, resulting in life-altering scarring. Her uncle said the mattress she was lying on had caught fire.

Satellite images support accounts that Mukumbi – which had once comprised about 400 structures, including a school, a health facility, and a church – was destroyed by 7 November 2016.

Following protests, in 2019 Chemaf agreed to pay via the local authority US\$1.5 million, but some former residents received as little as US\$300. Chemaf denies any wrongdoing, liability, or involvement in the destruction of Mukumbi, or directing military forces to destroy it.



A man stands with a child, whose face is blurred.

© Amnesty International (Candy Ofime)

Joseph Kitenge and his niece, who was severely injured during the destruction of Mukumbi, interviewed in the town of Kanfufu, 24 February 2022



A large yellow door is marked with a red cross for eviction.

© Amnesty International (Jean-Mobert Senga)

A house marked for eviction to expand an energy transition mine, Kolwezi, DRC, September 2022

Bulldozed crops and sexual assault

Near Kolwezi, a subsidiary of Eurasian Resources Group (ERG), which is headquartered in Luxembourg and whose largest shareholder is the government of Kazakhstan, runs the Metalkol Roan Tailings Reclamation (RTR) project.

Twenty-one farmers, part of a collective growing crops on the fringes of the concession near the village of Tshamundenda, said that in February 2020, without any meaningful consultation or notice of eviction, a detachment of soldiers, some with dogs, occupied the area while the fields they had tended were bulldozed.

To date, I don't have a job or other sources of income. I wander, from home to home, to find

One woman, who we are calling Kabibi to protect her identity, described how she was trying to harvest her crops before they were destroyed when she was seized by three soldiers and gang raped, while other soldiers watched.

Kabibi, who was two months pregnant, required medical treatment. She told her family and village chief about the incident, but was too afraid to report it to Metalkol, or the local authorities. Her baby was later delivered safely.

Kabibi told researchers: "I'm a widow, I can't afford to register my children in school ... To date, I don't have a job or other sources of income. I wander, from home to home, to find something to eat for my kids."

The farmers have repeatedly protested and advocated for compensation but have not been offered effective remedy.

In response, ERG said it had no control over the deployment of soldiers. It said the government determined the farmers' collective had received compensation from a previous mine operator, which the farmers deny.



A child stands in amongst buildings, we see the back of her head and shoulders.

© Amnesty International (Repartage Sans Frontières)

"Kabibi" (pseudonym) was evicted from her farmland, located near Metalkol's concession, and sexually assaulted by military forces when she attempted to retrieve her crops, photographed in Tshamundenda, 10 September 2022

Stop forced evictions

The report urges the DRC authorities to immediately end forced evictions, instigate an impartial commission of inquiry, and strengthen and enforce national laws related to mining and evictions in line with international human rights standards.

The authorities have carried out or facilitated forced evictions and failed in their obligation to protect people's rights, including those enshrined in the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#).

The military must never be involved in evictions.

The companies' claims that they adhere to high ethical standards have been shown to be hollow. They have a responsibility to investigate the abuses identified, provide effective redress, and act to prevent further harms. All companies should ensure their operations do not harm frontline communities.

human rights, establish processes that improve the lives of people in the region, and provide remedy for the abuses suffered.”

Agnès Callamard of Amnesty International said: “The Democratic Republic of the Congo can play a pivotal role in the world’s transition from fossil fuels, but the rights of communities must not be trampled in the rush to mine minerals critical to decarbonizing the global economy.”



Forced evictions at industrial cobalt and copper mines in the DRC

Expansion of mines has led to grievous human rights abuses.

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#17

14/04/2021



Serbia halts Zijin mine over environmental breaches

[Reuters](#) | April 14, 2021 | 8:41 am [Top Companies Europe Copper](#)



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Majdanpek copper mine located in the east of Serbia in Bor District. (*Image courtesy of RTB Bor | Instagram.*)

Serbia has ordered China's Zijin Mining Group to halt work at a shaft at the country's only copper mine and to complete a wastewater treatment plant after it failed to comply with environmental standards, the mining and energy minister said on Wednesday.

Zijin became Serbia's strategic partner in the RTB Bor copper complex which includes the Jama mine, pledging to invest \$1.26 billion in return for a 63% stake.

Minister Zorana Mihajlovic said authorities in late March ordered Zijin's Serbia-based unit to halt work on its Jama copper mining shaft.

"The state has ... responded to the complaints of citizens living in the vicinity of the Jama mine," Mihajlovic said in a statement.

In a statement later on Wednesday, Zijin's unit in Serbia said it had halted construction of ventilation shafts for the Jama mine located in the town of Bor, as ordered by authorities, after residents complained about noise levels.

"The exploitation of copper in the Jama mine is ongoing, deep under ground," it said.

Mihajlovic said the Zijin unit had also been ordered to urgently complete a waste water treatment plant and stop polluting the River Pek, a tributary of the Danube.

"They have until April 30 to eliminate all irregularities," she said.

China has invested billions of euros in Serbia, mostly in the form of soft loans to finance highway and energy projects.

Last week, Zijin's unit in Serbia said it plans to invest \$408 million in 2021 to overhaul, expand and improve environmental standards at its mines and a smelter at the Bor complex.

In its 2019 report, the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution watchdog said Serbia was Europe's most polluted country.

Last Saturday thousands rallied in the capital Belgrade to protest against a lack of government action to prevent pollution mainly caused by industry and mining.

(By Aleksandar Vasovic; Editing by Daria Sito-Sucic and Mark Potter)

Government has ordered Zijin Mining Group to halt work at a shaft at the RTB Bor copper mine and to complete a wastewater treatment plant after it failed to comply with environmental standards.

 www.mining.com

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Dave Evans

Regular

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#18

27/03/2024

New report exposes the environmental and human costs of DRC's cobalt boom

POSTED ON 27 MARCH 2024

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Toxic pollution from industrial mines challenges clean energy claims

"The world needs Congo's cobalt to hit net zero targets, but the energy transition is not benefitting hundreds of thousands of Congolese people living in the shadow of the big industrial cobalt mines. They are not driving EVs nor enjoying a healthy environment. Instead, they are plagued by water pollution that's making them sicker and poorer. We all need a sustainable future, but this must apply equally to those in the global North as well as to those in the DRC."

Emmanuel Umpula

Executive Director, [AFREWATCH](#)

"Our research reveals a glaring disconnect between the industry's 'clean cobalt' claims and the stark reality faced by Congolese communities. The right to clean water and a healthy environment is non-negotiable for everyone and should not be sacrificed for some as part of the green energy transition. EV companies buying cobalt need to ensure it is responsibly sourced and should demand that mining companies clean up their act."

Anneke Van Woudenberg

Executive Director, [RAID](#)

A [new report](#) released today reveals that toxic pollution from industrial cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is having devastating human and environmental impacts. The findings challenge the narrative of 'clean' and 'sustainable cobalt' frequently promoted by multinational mining companies. Cobalt is a critical raw material used in the rechargeable batteries of electric vehicles and


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belt of southern DRC.

The [110-page ground-breaking report](#), "*Beneath the Green: A critical look at the cost of industrial cobalt mining in the DRC*," authored by UK corporate watchdog [RAID](#) and DRC-based African Resources Watch ([AFREWATCH](#)), is one of the first in-depth studies of the environmental impacts of industrial cobalt mining on the human rights of hundreds of thousands of Congolese people living in and around Kolwezi, the heart of DRC's cobalt industry. Focused on the impacts of water pollution, it finds that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is routinely being violated for fenceline communities living in the shadow of the world's largest cobalt and copper mines.

Communities visited by RAID and AFREWATCH said that the toxic contamination is harming their health and having destructive consequences on local ecosystems and agriculture. Local residents said there is not enough clean water to drink, let alone enough for washing and personal hygiene, forcing them to use contaminated water for their everyday needs. A staggering 56% of those interviewed report that the pollution is affecting the gynaecological and reproductive health of women and girls, resulting in irregular menstruation, urogenital infections, more frequent miscarriages and, in some cases, birth defects. More and more young girls and teenagers also appear to be affected.

 Key findings on human rights impact of toxic environmental pollution around DRC's industrial cobalt mines including impact on women's health

Local residents also said they are suffering from regular skin diseases and were particularly worried about the health of their children, who seem to be more seriously impacted. Nearly everyone (99%) said crop and fields yields are dramatically reduced due to water contamination, with drastic impacts on people's income. In addition, 59% said they have reduced their food intake to one meal a day, 59% have taken their children out of school due to lack of funds, and 75% said they can no longer afford healthcare or medicine. The interviewees all trace the decline in their living standards to the recent cobalt mining boom.

Spanning 19 months, the investigation involved fieldwork across 25 villages and towns in proximity to five of the largest cobalt and copper mines globally, operated by European and Chinese mining companies. It involved comprehensive interviews with 144 residents, offering a rare glimpse into the lived experiences of fenceline communities. RAID and AFREWATCH also interviewed medical experts and scientists, scrutinised scientific studies and examined hundreds of pages of company documents.

According to RAID and AFREWATCH, the results of the study show that DRC's cobalt and copper mining region appears to be turning into a "sacrifice zone", which UN experts describe as areas where people suffer severe health issues and human rights

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Scientific findings back up the accounts from the local communities, with at least 22 scientific studies demonstrating that the rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands in the area are severely polluted by mining activities. The companies' own reports and assessments, analysed by RAID and AFREWATCH, also clearly identify the environmental risks and potential impacts on human health resulting from industrial cobalt mining.

In addition, RAID and AFREWATCH commissioned new research from the University of Lubumbashi's Toxicology and Environmental Department on water bodies which local communities said were contaminated. According to the scientists, preliminary results from analysis in March 2024 showed that the five water bodies they assessed are all affected by acidified industrial pollution. The Katapula and the Kalenge rivers were classed as "hyper-acidic", while the Dipeta and Dilala Rivers were "very acidic". The scientists said these four rivers are unable to host fish, and their water is toxic for human and animal health.

In public documents, correspondence and meetings with RAID and AFREWATCH, the companies in the study highlighted the steps they are taking to reduce the risk of contamination. Yet no company was willing to provide evidence confirming that their practices were effective. The companies said historic pollution from older mines, contamination from artisanal mining and other activities were largely to blame.

However, RAID and AFREWATCH found that at least 14 significant toxic environmental pollution incidents from the five mines had been reported in recent years, including tailings dam breaches and sulphuric acid spills. Local communities said they believed the clean-up of these spills had been inadequate and that, in many cases, the effects of the pollution continue.

One fenceline resident interviewed by RAID and AFREWATCH said: "We live in an environment that brings us more problems than solutions. We are becoming sick, our soil and water is polluted, and our lands are taken from us." Another resident said: "We are the big losers from mining. During my 53 years of life, I have seen a lot of changes. These companies have come only to enrich themselves and to bring us death."

Mining companies recognise that chronic clean water shortage is a concern for local residents and have constructed boreholes to help alleviate the problem. Yet RAID and AFREWATCH found that none of the companies are meeting the minimal standards for clean water provision set out by DRC regulations, and all were well below the minimal amount set out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of 20 litres per person per day for drinking and hygiene. The failure of mining companies to provide even basic minimal provision of clean water was in sharp contrast to the profits being made from mining activities, RAID and AFREWATCH said.

environmental protections, despite DRC's strong environmental laws. National regulatory agencies, crippled by a lack of resources and expertise, struggle to hold mining companies accountable, allowing water pollution to persist almost unchecked.


The mines covered in this study supply cobalt to the world's largest electric vehicle manufacturing companies including Tesla, Volkswagen, Mercedes Benz, BYD and General Motors, among others. RAID and AFREWATCH called on the EV companies and others in the [supply chain](#) to press mining companies to supply cobalt that is truly clean and sustainable.

For the full documents:

- Please visit the full report [here](#)
- For full correspondence between RAID/AFREWATCH and the companies see [here](#)
- For a legal analysis of DRC's environmental and water laws see [here](#)(in French)
- Download 'Key Findings' in English [here](#) and in French [here](#)
- For a summary of key scientific studies on environmental impacts of mining in DRC's copper-cobalt belt click [here](#)
- See our 2021 report on workers' rights abuses at DRC's industrial cobalt mines [here](#)

Further background:

The mining companies covered include: Tenke Fungurume Mining (owned by CMOG); Metalkol (Eurasian Resources Group); Compagnie Minière de Musonoie – **COMMUS (Zijin Mining)**; and Glencore's Kamoto Copper Company (KCC) and Mutanda Mining (MUMI).

 [New RAID and AFREWATCH report: Beneath the Green: A critical look at the cost of industrial cobalt mining in the DRC](#)

New report

Key Findings

"We live in an environment that brings us more problems than solutions. We are becoming sick, our soil and water is polluted, and our lands are taken from us."
Pierre, an inhabitant of the village of Noa, in the Congolese copper-cobalt belt

1. Cobalt is a critical mineral for the green energy transition. It is used in the rechargeable batteries in electric vehicles and is primarily found in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which holds around 70% of the world's reserves. It is mined as a by-product of copper, another critical mineral. DRC is the primary producer of cobalt and the third largest producer of copper. 88% of DRC's cobalt is produced by industrial mines operated by some of the world's largest mining companies, the remaining 12% is from artisanal miners.

2. In one of the first in-depth studies on the environmental impacts of cobalt mining on Congolese communities who live near the mines, RAID and AFREWATCH visited 25 villages and towns, and collected detailed testimonies from 144 people living around five of the world's largest cobalt and copper mines.^[1] We interviewed medical experts and scientists, scrutinised scientific studies and examined hundreds of pages of company documents.

3. Mining companies routinely promote the cobalt from DRC's industrial mines as being "clean", "sustainable", and free from human rights and environmental harms. Yet our research reveals that water pollution and water depletion from mining operations is severely affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of fenceline residents, infringing upon their right to clean water and their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The DRC's cobalt and copper mining region appears to be turning into a "sacrifice zone", which UN experts describe as areas where populations suffer devastating health consequences and human rights abuses from living in heavily contaminated areas.

4. Those we interviewed were unequivocal in that they believed water contamination from industrial mining activities is harming their health, the environment and is further limiting their income. The lack of access to clean water for drinking was a primary concern consistent across all interviews, as well as concerns about washing and hygiene. The health of women and girls appears to be acutely impacted by the contamination.

- 56% of those interviewed said women are increasingly experiencing gynaecological and reproductive issues such as irregular menstruation, urogenital infections, more frequent miscarriages and, in some cases, birth defects. More and more young girls and teenagers also appear to be affected.
- 72% reported recurring skin diseases including itching, spots, rashes, and white patches on the skin following contact with contaminated water.
- 56% expressed serious concerns about the health of their children, who they said seem to experience the effects of water pollution more intensely than the adults.
- Nearly everyone said contaminated water is negatively impacting their income and pushing them further into poverty. For instance, 99% of those who relied on fishing or agriculture said their yields have dramatically decreased. This included fewer and smaller fish, and crops rotting when irrigated with polluted water.
- Nearly 60% said the loss of income brought about by the water pollution has forced them remove their children from school as they could no longer afford school fees.
- 59% said they have been forced to reduce their food intake to one meal a day.
- 75% say they could no longer afford healthcare or medicine when sick.

ivers, lakes, streams, groundwater and wetlands near the DRC's cobalt and copper mines are severely polluted by mining activities. These studies have found that copper, cobalt, lead, arsenic, cadmium, uranium, manganese, mercury and acidified pollutants (such as sulphuric acid, of which huge amounts are used by industrial mines) have been released into the air, soil and water in nearby towns and communities.

6. The mining companies in our study, which are all large European or Chinese multinationals, are aware of the possible contamination and its potential risks to people and the environment. These risks are clearly identified in their Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs), which the mines are required to produce every five years, and which RAID and AFREWATCH have analysed.

7. In their ESIAs, as well as in correspondence and meetings with RAID and AFREWATCH, the companies highlight the steps they are taking to reduce the risks of contamination, and describe elaborate environmental policies they are implementing. Yet no company was willing to provide evidence, such as audits or third-party assessments, confirming that their practices were effective in curbing environmental contamination.

8. The companies say historic pollution, contamination from artisanal mining, and other economic activities are largely to blame, and that their mines operate "closed circuits" which prevent wastewater discharge and do not contribute to environmental harms. However, almost none of the multinational companies profiting from extracting the cobalt and copper, nor the DRC government, appear to be taking meaningful steps to resolve the legacy pollution.

9. Our research also shows that the pollution continues. Although the companies say that they take immediate steps to rectify the problem when an accident occurs, our research found that in at least 14 significant toxic incidents over the past few years, including tailings storage facility breaches and sulphuric acid spills, local communities viewed the clean-up as inadequate, with limited or no compensation for those impacted. In many of these incidents, local residents said the effects of the pollution continue.

10. Recognising the lack of access to clean drinking water, mining companies have taken some steps to provide potable water by constructing boreholes and water pumping stations. While this partly alleviates the chronic shortage of clean water, our investigation found that none of the mining companies had provided the minimal number of water points required by DRC regulations. Nor did they meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guideline of 20 litres per person per day, the bare minimum required for drinking and basic hygiene.

11. The DRC government is also failing. Congolese law provides for strong environmental protections, but government agencies tasked with upholding the

said they had limited resources, lacked expertise, and often failed to coordinate effectively between agencies. Very few companies have been penalised for pollution.

12. Although communities expressed increasing despair about the contamination in their environment and its impact on their health when interviewed by RAID and AFREWATCH, the companies said they had received few or no grievances about these concerns. None of the companies said they were aware of the specific impacts on women and girls. Most said they were aware of a scientific study on increased birth defects, but did not see this as being linked to their operations. It raises important questions as to why these concerns are not being captured by companies or whether they are being ignored.

13. Despite financial constraints and difficulty accessing the courts, local residents have sought to use the law to challenge companies. Legal analysis shows there have been at least 3 cases in local courts in Kolwezi and Lubumbashi related to water pollution, and at least 7 other formal complaints to companies or government agencies, indicating local communities are deeply concerned about this issue.

14. The findings in this study raise important questions about the effectiveness of mining companies' environmental mechanisms and the DRC government's enforcement of its environmental and water laws. It also raises crucial questions about how we can better achieve climate justice, ensuring a a just and fair transition to green energy, which does not exacerbate inequality or further violate people's rights and the environment.

15. The transition to 'net zero' is critical to address the climate emergency, but "going green" in the global North, should not come at the price of more harm to Congolese people. The world's electric vehicle and battery manufacturers who use cobalt from Congo's industrial mines should use their influence to press mining companies to supply cobalt that is truly 'clean' and 'sustainable'. The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is universal to us all.

[1] The mines in our study are: Tenke Fungurume (owned by CMOC); Metalkol (Eurasian Resources Group); COMMUS (Zijin Mining); and Glencore's Kamoto Copper Company (KCC) and Mutanda Mining (MUMI).

[New report exposes the environmental and human costs of DRC's cobalt boom](#)

New investigation by RAID and AFREWATCH into toxic environmental pollution from industrial cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reveals devastating human rights impacts.

raid-uk.org

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