



BRIEFING

Labour standards in EV battery sourcing

Date:	19 May 2022	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	Restricted	Tracking number:	2122-4282

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Michael Wood Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety Minister of Transport	Note the content of this briefing. Indicate if you wish to discuss the matters raised in this briefing with officials.	30 May 2022

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
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The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Ministry of Transport

Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

Comments

Official Information Act 1982



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Purpose

To provide information on labour standards issues related to electric vehicle (EV) battery sourcing and potential issues to explore further in your upcoming discussions with counterparts from Norway, the UK and US.

Executive summary

You have requested information on labour standards issues related to EV battery sourcing and options for engaging on these issues. This will inform your meeting with counterparts from Norway, the UK and US in June 2022.

Over 70 per cent of the world's cobalt is sourced from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with poor working conditions associated particularly with artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). ASM cobalt workers in the DRC account for an estimated 110,000 to 150,000 workers (of which at least 40,000 may be children). They are exposed to extremely hazardous working conditions, with both immediate threats (such as cave-ins) and long-term health problems.

There is a wide range of action being taken internationally by governments, multilateral institutions and the private sector to improve conditions for ASM cobalt miners in the DRC. This includes:

- Governments of Norway, UK and US – substantial aid funding coupled with certain projects targeted directly at improving conditions for ASM cobalt miners in the DRC
- Multilateral institutions – the ILO has an active programme in the DRC, and the OECD's due diligence framework targeted at high-risk minerals is widely used internationally
- Private sector – there are a wide range of initiatives generally targeted at enhancing transparency and due diligence practices.

Some organisations and governments are also indirectly mitigating the problem by reducing the demand for mined cobalt through battery recycling and the development of batteries which do not use cobalt. In New Zealand, e-waste (including EV batteries) is a declared "priority product" for stewardship under the *Waste Minimisation Act 2008*. Proposed regulations were publicly consulted on in late 2021, with final decisions to be made later in 2022. The reuse and recycling of batteries may reduce the number of workers experiencing harm through ASM.

We recommend that further opportunities for New Zealand to improve conditions for ASM workers should build on the wide range of work already underway. Norway and the US currently have active projects in the DRC aimed at improving conditions in cobalt mining. New Zealand could take a similar approach by providing funding or other support (such as technical assistance), whether for a new project or in support of existing projects. However, further investigation would be needed to determine what gaps exist and where any additional projects could add the greatest value.

We therefore recommend that your forthcoming discussions with ministerial counterparts be exploratory in nature. These meetings could provide a valuable opportunity to understand how Norway, the UK and US are seeing the current problems and opportunities in the sector, and help to identify the appropriate action for New Zealand going forward.

Recommended action

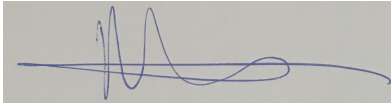
The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment recommends that you:

a **Note** the content of this briefing.

Noted

b **Indicate** if you wish to discuss the matters raised in this briefing with officials.

Yes / No



Nita Zodgekar
Manager, International Labour Policy
Labour, Science & Enterprise, MBIE

19/05/2022

Hon Michael Wood
**Minister for Workplace Relations and
Safety**
Minister of Transport

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Background

1. You have asked for information on labour standards issues related to electric vehicle (EV) battery sourcing and potential options for engaging on these issues. This information is intended to support your discussions with counterparts from Norway, the UK and US as part of your visit to Europe in June 2022.
2. EVs most commonly use lithium-ion batteries which are generally manufactured with cobalt, among other elements. The extraction of cobalt has been associated with extremely poor working conditions and exploitation, particularly in the context of informal artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).^{1 2} This problem is exacerbated by the increasing demand for cobalt connected with the increasing demand for EVs and other electronic goods, driven in part through government interventions.³
3. This briefing provides information on:
 - a. The current situation in key cobalt sourcing markets
 - b. International action that has been taken to date to improve labour standards for ASM cobalt miners in the DRC
 - c. Opportunities for New Zealand to take action, and potential connections with the proposed legislation to address modern slavery in international supply chains.

Cobalt sourcing and extraction

4. Cobalt extraction is the first of several tiers in the EV battery supply chain, indicated at a high-level in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. High-level EV battery supply chain



Over 70 per cent of the world's cobalt production is sourced from the DRC

5. Table 1 below shows world cobalt mine production in 2020 and 2021, highlighting that over 70 per cent of the world's cobalt is sourced from the DRC. The remainder of cobalt

¹ See, for example: *The dark side of Congo's cobalt rush*. The New Yorker, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/05/31/the-dark-side-of-congos-cobalt-rush>; *Apple and Google named in US lawsuit over Congolese child cobalt mining deaths*. The Guardian, Dec 2019. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/16/apple-and-google-named-in-us-lawsuit-over-congolese-child-cobalt-mining-deaths>; *"This is what we die for" – Human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo power the global trade in cobalt*. Amnesty International, Jan 2016. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AFR6231832016ENGLISH.pdf>.

² Poor working conditions and exploitation in mineral extraction is not limited to cobalt extraction. 'Conflict minerals' such as gold, tungsten, tantalum and tin are all used in electronic goods, and have long been connected to human rights abuses and armed conflict particularly in the DRC. However, this briefing focuses on cobalt given the widespread recognition of the poor working conditions associated with its sourcing, together with its strong (and increasing) global demand driven by EVs.

³ The UK Government, for example, has announced that it will ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in 2030, and strengthen public charging infrastructure. It is also subsidising the purchase of low-emission vehicles.

production is widely fragmented, with the next three largest producers (Russia, Australia and the Philippines) accounting for approximately 10 per cent of global production.

Table 1. World cobalt mine production (metric tons), arranged by 2021 production levels⁴

Country	2020	2021 (est.)	Reserves (est.) ⁵
Democratic Republic of the Congo	98,000	120,000	3,500,000
Russia	9,000	7,600	610,000
Other countries	7,640	6,600	47,000
Australia	5,630	5,600	1,400,000
Philippines	4,500	4,500	250,000
Canada	3,690	4,300	220,000
Cuba	3,800	3,900	500,000
Papua New Guinea	2,940	3,000	260,000
Madagascar	850	2,500	100,000
Morocco	2,300	2,300	13,000
China	2,200	2,200	80,000
Indonesia	1,100	2,100	600,000
United States	600	700	69,000
World total (rounded)	142,000	170,000	7,600,000

6. Australia has substantial cobalt reserves; however, current production is comparatively low. Australia's objectives in its *2022 Critical Minerals Strategy* include making a significant contribution to meeting the growing global demand for critical minerals (including cobalt) and supporting regional economic growth. The Australian Government is now actively promoting and seeking investment for the development of critical minerals projects, including cobalt extraction.
7. Moving up the supply chain, much of the world's current cobalt production is exported to China which is the world's leading producer of refined cobalt. China is also the world's leading consumer of cobalt, with more than 80 per cent of its cobalt consumption being used by the rechargeable battery industry.

There is increasing competition for cobalt and other rare earth minerals in the DRC

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⁴ Source: *Mineral Commodity Summaries 2022 – Cobalt*. United States Geological Survey, Jan 2022. Available at: <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2022/mcs2022-cobalt.pdf>.

⁵ 'Reserves' refer to resources that could currently be economically/profitably extracted or produced. Identified world cobalt resources equate to around 25 million tons, the vast majority of which are in copper deposits in the DRC and Zambia, laterite deposits in and around Australia and Cuba, and nickel-copper sulfide deposits in Australia, Canada, Russia and the US. More than 120 million tons of cobalt resources have also been identified on the floor of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans.

Cobalt extraction is associated with extremely poor working conditions, particularly for artisanal miners

9. Problems seen in the cobalt extraction sector are most closely connected with artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). ASM operates in the informal sector and involves individuals working by hand using basic equipment and often lacking basic protective gear. Amnesty International estimates there are 110,000 to 150,000 artisanal miners in the DRC, while the OECD has estimated that ASM accounts for 20 to 30 per cent of the DRC's cobalt production (varying based on factors such as the international price of cobalt and seasonality).
10. Reports of working conditions in cobalt mines in the DRC have identified extreme hazards including: exposure to cobalt dust and particles leading to respiratory and skin problems; food and water contamination; exposure to radiation; and accidents such as cave-ins and landslides.⁶ In 2019, 43 artisanal miners were killed by a landslide at a copper and cobalt mine while working illegally on a site run by Swiss mining company Glencore.⁷
11. Many children reportedly work in cobalt mining, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimating in 2014 that approximately 40,000 boys and girls worked across all mines across southern DRC. Interviews of children by Amnesty International found that they: experienced pain from frequently carrying heavy loads; suffered from exposure to cobalt; were often ill; often worked without eating; experienced physical abuse from security guards and adult artisanal miners; and experienced financial exploitation from traders.⁸

International action underway

12. Action to address working conditions and exploitation in cobalt extraction, both directly and indirectly, is currently being undertaken by a range of governments, businesses and civil society organisations around the world.

The DRC government has undertaken efforts to improve conditions for ASM workers, though problems largely remain

13. The DRC has committed to taking action to improve the situation for ASM workers. In 2017, the DRC Government committed to eradicating child labour in the mining sector by 2025. Since then, the DRC has become an Alliance 8.7⁹ 'pathfinder' country, committing to going further and faster to address modern slavery and child labour. In 2020, the US Department of Labor considered that DRC had made "moderate advancement" in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. It found that, while there had been some prosecutions and other progress, children continued to be subjected to the worst forms of child labour, including in the forced mining of conflict minerals and in armed conflict.
14. The DRC has also attempted to formalise ASM. In Dec 2019, a State-owned company was established and granted a legal monopoly over the purchase of ASM cobalt mined in the DRC. While the primary aim was to give the DRC greater control over cobalt prices, the intention was also to set standards and provide assurance that ASM cobalt from the DRC

⁶ *RMIS – Raw Materials in the Battery Value Chain*. European Commission Joint Research Centre, Apr 2020. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/239710>.

⁷ *Death toll rises at Glencore mine in Congo after collapse*. Reuters, Jun 2019. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-mining-glencore-idUSKCN1TT1CT>.

⁸ See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr62/3183/2016/en/>.

⁹ Alliance 8.7 refers to the group of countries, UN agencies, social partners, businesses, research institutions and other groups who work together to achieve Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Target 8.7 calls for States to take immediate action to address modern slavery by 2030 and to end child labour by 2025.

was produced responsibly. However, the company has reportedly experienced governance problems and has not yet purchased any cobalt. The DRC Minister of Mines informed media on 11 May 2022 that she was seeking to cancel the Government decree allowing the monopoly, while supporting formalisation efforts across the sector.

Norway, the UK and US distribute aid funding to the DRC, and have funded projects to improve conditions for miners

15. In financial terms, most support to the DRC is provided through humanitarian aid funding and primarily directed towards addressing broader disaster/emergency, food and health problems. Norway and the US have also supported individual projects aimed at directly addressing ASM problems:
 - a. In June 2021, Norway granted NOK 12 million (approx. NZD 2 million) to Caritas Norway for work to reduce modern slavery in the agriculture and mining industries in the DRC. Caritas will work with the authorities and private sector, as well as with vulnerable groups.
 - b. In Dec 2020, the US funded a private research firm to undertake a technical assistance project tracing child and forced labour in the DRC's cobalt supply chain. This project will conclude in Dec 2024.
 - c. In Oct 2018, the US provided USD 3.5m in funding for a project led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to combat child labour in the DRC's cobalt industry. This project is supporting efforts to: raise awareness of opportunities to combat child labour; build government enforcement capacity; and improve private sector monitoring and remediation. The project is due to end in Sep 2022.
16. A table summarising the actions taken by Norway, the UK and the US to support the DRC with an impact on its ASM sector is attached as **Annex One**.

A range of multilateral institutions are providing support and resources for improving working conditions

17. The ILO is currently working with the DRC through an active Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) from 2021 to 2024. DWCPs are the main vehicle for ILO support to countries. They set out country programme priorities and outcomes, and are used to organise the ILO's capabilities and resources. The DRC DWCP is focused on two priorities: inclusive economic growth and the promotion of decent jobs primarily for young people; and improving labour productivity by promoting social dialogue, social protection and fundamental rights at work.
18. In August 2021, UNICEF and RCS Global Group (a company providing sustainable sourcing services) announced a joint project to develop and roll-out a toolkit for mine operators and others in the supply chain to better identify child rights violations in ASM and implement protection measures. The toolkit is scheduled to be rolled out from June 2022.
19. The OECD *Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas*, developed through a multi-stakeholder process, helps companies respect human rights and avoid contributing to conflict through their mineral sourcing practices.¹⁰ It provides the following five-step framework for risk-based due diligence:
 - a. Establish strong company management systems

¹⁰ The most recent edition of the OECD Guidance, published in 2016, is available at: <https://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-Minerals-Edition3.pdf>.

- b. Identify and assess risk in the supply chain
 - c. Design and implement a strategy to respond to identified risks
 - d. Carry out independent third-party audit of supply chain due diligence at identified points in the supply chain
 - e. Report on supply chain due diligence.
20. The OECD framework is used internationally as a standard by governments as well as the private sector. It has been endorsed through multiple UN Security Council resolutions, recognised in an EU Regulation establishing due diligence obligations for importers of conflict minerals, and used as a benchmark for US disclosures on conflict minerals¹¹.

The private sector is also driving improvements through initiatives to enhance transparency and due diligence in the cobalt supply chain

21. There are a wide range of private sector-led initiatives aimed at improving conditions for cobalt miners, as well as miners of other minerals in the DRC, by promoting and supporting transparency and due diligence in mineral supply chains. These include the following:

Table 2. Private sector initiatives improving conditions for cobalt miners

Initiative	Description
Responsible Cobalt Initiative (RCI)	Launched in Nov 2016 by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce for Metals, Minerals & Chemicals with support from the OECD, this initiative aims to: support alignment with the OECD framework; promote cooperation with the DRC Government and affected local communities; and communicate progress and results to impacted communities and the public. The RCI and Responsible Minerals Initiative (RMI; a separate organisation) launched a joint project in 2018 from which 30 cobalt refiners now participate in a Responsible Minerals Assurance Process and undergo independent audits.
Fair Cobalt Alliance	A multi-stakeholder initiative launched in Aug 2020 that aims to improve conditions for ASM cobalt workers in the DRC, address child labour, and support the development of a more diversified economy.
Global Battery Alliance	A multi-stakeholder partnership founded in 2017 at the World Economic Forum to establish sustainable battery production. One of its key groups is the ‘Cobalt Action Partnership’, which is focused on eliminating child and forced labour from the cobalt value chain. In Feb 2022 the Global Battery Alliance partnered with the RMI to advance this work.
‘Better Mining’ programme by RCS Global	An assurance programme that monitors and supports the improvement of conditions on ASM sites. This programme has partnered with the RMI and Fair Cobalt Alliance to expand its reach across ASM mines in the DRC.
Cobalt Industry Responsible Assessment Framework (CIRAF)	Developed by the Cobalt Institute (whose members account for over 70 per cent of mined cobalt production globally), the CIRAF was launched in 2019 to strengthen due diligence across the cobalt industry by demonstrating best practice. CIRAF participants commit to undertaking an annual assessment and publishing a summary of their assessment.

¹¹ In 2020, the US Government Accountability Office found that 92 per cent of companies which were required to do due diligence reported using the OECD framework. See: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-531.pdf>.

22. Research published by Amnesty International in Nov 2017 examined the due diligence taken by 29 companies since Jan 2016, when earlier research was published highlighting the human rights abuses in cobalt mining in the DRC.¹² They surveyed the companies based on the OECD framework and found that only two companies had taken “adequate” action, while the majority had taken minimal or no action. However, research from the Principles for Responsible Investment group in 2020 found that all but one of the 16 companies surveyed had a supply chain policy related to social issues, and this had increased by 25 per cent since the research began in 2018.¹³

Some organisations are indirectly mitigating the problem by reducing the demand for mined cobalt

23. Battery recycling efforts have increased in recent years, including from the private sector and through government intervention, and is likely to grow over time as more EV batteries reach the end of their life cycles. The US Department of Energy launched a lithium-ion battery recycling R&D centre in 2019, which aims to make battery recycling profitable while also reducing the US’ vulnerability to supply chain disruptions of critical minerals.
24. Meanwhile, companies such as Tesla are actively researching and developing batteries that do not use cobalt. Tesla has developed cobalt-free lithium iron phosphate battery packs for lower-energy applications, and is now using these batteries in its Model 3 vehicles.¹⁴ A mixture of ongoing R&D, ethics, cost pressures, supply chains, and geopolitics mean that battery chemistries will be in a state of change for some time.

Opportunities for New Zealand

Government is taking steps to reduce demand for cobalt through e-waste recycling

25. In 2020, the Government announced that e-waste, including EV batteries, will be one of six products to be declared “priority products” for regulated product stewardship under the *Waste Minimisation Act 2008*. This means a regulated product stewardship scheme must be developed as soon as practicable to manage the environmental impact of these products during their life cycle (including design, manufacture, purchase, use and end-of-life).
26. In late 2021, the Ministry for the Environment consulted on regulations to support product stewardship for tyres and large batteries. The proposed regulations were informed by the co-design report from the Battery Industry Group (a battery stakeholder group), which proposed a stewardship scheme that maintained the value of large batteries in a circular economy for as long as possible, by maximising the second-life use and the value extracted from them at end-of-life. At end-of-life the battery is recycled at no cost to owner.
27. The summary of submissions from the public consultation is expected to be released in July 2022, with final decisions on regulations made later in 2022. In addition to environmental impacts, measures to reduce demand for mined cobalt through reuse and recycling may also reduce the numbers of workers experiencing harm through ASM.

There may be opportunities to improve conditions for cobalt miners, but these should build upon the wide-ranging efforts already undertaken internationally

28. On the supply-side, there is a wide range of work already underway to address working conditions in ASM cobalt mining in the DRC. Government-level interventions by Norway, the

¹² *Industry giants fail to tackle child labour allegations in cobalt battery supply chains*. Amnesty International, Nov 2017. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/industry-giants-fail-to-tackle-child-labour-allegations-in-cobalt-battery-supply-chains/>. The 2016 research is referenced in footnote 1.

¹³ *Responsible cobalt sourcing: engagement results*. Principles for Responsible Investment, 2020. Available at: <https://www.unpri.org/download?ac=14320>.

¹⁴ In April 2022, Tesla announced that nearly half its vehicles produced in the first quarter of 2022 were equipped with lithium iron phosphate batteries.

UK and US have primarily been more humanitarian aid-based, though they have also financed specific projects to improve outcomes for ASM cobalt workers.

29. New Zealand could potentially take a similar approach and fund or provide other support (such as technical assistance) for projects targeted at ASM cobalt workers (including potentially supporting existing projects). New Zealand currently has two active projects with the ILO, for example, to support vulnerable workers in Myanmar and Cambodia. However, further work would be required to understand what types of intervention could have the greatest impact. This would need to be informed by a further understanding of factors such as:
 - a. Conditions for workers across the full EV battery supply chain, including at the refining and manufacturing stages and for miners of other minerals used in EV batteries
 - b. Whether current efforts (including from government and the private sector) are effective at improving working conditions for ASM miners, and how regulatory changes currently introduced or under consideration internationally (notably modern slavery legislation) may impact the sector
 - c. What the projected demand for cobalt looks like, including the degree to which this may be increased by government incentives, offset by developments in recycling and battery composition, and affected by other factors such as usage of different modes of transport.
30. This would also require further engagement to better understand what type of support from New Zealand would be most effective, and how any additional funding or resourcing needs could be met.

Proposed legislation to address modern slavery in the international supply chains of organisations in New Zealand is intended to further drive improvements

31. The Government's announced intention to transition New Zealand towards low-emission transport options increases the significance of the problem for New Zealand organisations. It is possible that focussing on EV uptake may exacerbate the harms experienced by cobalt miners. On the other hand, a focus on the well-being of cobalt miners may increase costs and/or risk slowing the transition to EVs.
32. In an international context, proposed legislation currently in public consultation would require organisations to take steps to address modern slavery in their operations and supply chains as follows:
 - a. All organisations would be required to take action if they became aware of modern slavery
 - b. Medium (\$20m revenue) and large organisations would be required to disclose the steps they are taking to address modern slavery
 - c. Large organisations (\$50m revenue) would be required to undertake due diligence.
33. While internationally the focus is on modern slavery rather than worker exploitation and poor working conditions, evidence suggests ASM cobalt miners are at high risk of being victims of modern slavery. The US Department of Labour has not identified forced labour in cobalt in the DRC, but has identified both forced labour and child forced labour in the extraction of gold, tantalum, tin and tungsten. Officials are considering options for the point at which an organisation should be considered to have "become aware" of modern slavery in their supply chain, but consider that the source of this evidence should include reliable government and NGO sources. Organisations that become aware of modern slavery would be expected to work with the relevant supplier, report the case to the authorities and/or change suppliers.

34. New Zealand organisations are likely to be at the end of the EV battery supply chain, involved in the sale of EVs rather than in any of the production stages. In undertaking a risk assessment as part of its due diligence, an organisation would need to consider risks across all tiers of its supply chain. Consideration of the measures an organisation takes to address particular risks would need to be informed by factors such as their ability to influence the relevant suppliers and the potential harm that could occur if no action was taken. We anticipate that the actions large organisations take will be informed by international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the OECD due diligence framework for responsible supply chains of minerals.

We recommend that your discussions with counterparts be exploratory in nature

35. We recommend that your forthcoming discussions with ministerial counterparts be exploratory in nature, with the aim of informing our understanding of the problems and opportunities from their perspectives.
36. Much work is already underway to improve working conditions in cobalt extraction using a wide range of means, and any government intervention should build upon this existing work.
37. At the same time, government interventions are actively driving demand for EVs
38. Your meetings with ministerial counterparts could provide a valuable opportunity to understand how Norway, the UK and US are seeing the current problems and opportunities in the sector and help to identify the appropriate action for New Zealand going forward. Your meetings with counterparts could also explore the steps taken and impact of the modern slavery legislation introduced in Norway and the UK, and the conflict minerals disclosure legislation introduced in the US.

Next steps

39. This briefing provides an initial overview of issues associated with labour standards in EV battery sourcing, to support your upcoming discussions with ministerial counterparts in Europe. Further investigation would be required should you wish for officials to identify options for New Zealand to contribute to the improvement of labour standards in the sector.

Annexes

Annex One: Summary of actions taken by Norway, the UK and US

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Country	Summary of action taken
Norway	<p>Norway contributes around NOK 800-900 million (approx. NZD 130-147 million) to the DRC annually for humanitarian, stabilisation and development efforts. Norway established an embassy in the DRC in May 2020, and has identified modern slavery as a significant problem in the DRC particularly in relation to mining activities and protracted conflicts.</p> <p>Norway has actively strengthened its efforts to combat modern slavery, including through development assistance (as well as the introduction of supply chain legislation). In June 2021, Norway granted NOK 12 million (approx. NZD 2 million) to Caritas Norway for work to reduce modern slavery in the agriculture and mining industries in the DRC. Caritas will work with the authorities and private sector to address modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. Caritas will also work with vulnerable individuals and groups to strengthen their resistance to being recruited into modern slavery.</p>
United Kingdom	<p>The UK has allocated a budget of £31.1m towards funding projects in the DRC in 2022/23, mostly via the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. Project funding has primarily been directed towards the disaster relief, health and 'government and civil society' sectors. There are currently no active projects relating specifically to cobalt mining, though the UK is funding a £102m project over 12 years to "foster sustainable economic activities to support the private sector to be an engine of green growth, job creation and poverty alleviation".</p>
United States	<p>The US Department of Labor has provided USD 3.5m in funding for a project led by the International Labour Organization to combat child labour in the DRC's cobalt industry. This project is supporting efforts to: raise awareness of opportunities to combat child labour; build government enforcement capacity; and improve private sector monitoring and remediation. The project commenced in Oct 2018 and is due to end in Sep 2022.</p> <p>In Dec 2020, the US Department of Labor also funded a private research firm to undertake a technical assistance project tracing child and forced labour in the DRC's cobalt supply chain. This project will conclude in Dec 2024.</p> <p>More broadly, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided 804m USD in overseas development assistance to the DRC in fiscal year 2021. This was primarily directed towards the humanitarian / emergency response, food aid and food security, and health sectors.</p> <p>Increasing sustainable economic growth is a key development objective set out in the USAID-DRC Country Development Strategy 2020-2025. This includes improving natural resource management by increasing transparent minerals trade. As part of the Strategy, USAID will "continue to support responsible minerals trade and promote compliance by leveraging increased end-user demand for conflict-free minerals."</p> <p>The Dodd Frank Act, introduced in 2010, requires US-listed companies to disclose their actions to identify the source any conflict minerals (tin, tantalum tungsten and gold from the DRC or an adjoining country) that are part of their supply chain. Depending on the outcome of this process, the company may also be required to demonstrate their due diligence taken to further investigate the source of their minerals. The required disclosures do not apply to cobalt, but some companies voluntarily include cobalt in their disclosures and as part of their due diligence.</p>