Item 1

Problem Background

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**Intro**

In the heart of the African continent lies the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Within the second largest country in Africa, there lies an abundance of natural resources. Among these resources, cobalt stands out as a crucial element, playing a pivotal role in the global technologies revolution. As the world continues to rely on cobalt, the people of DRC are being taken advantage of for their labor. The estimated 200,000 people(Beaule, 2023) currently working the cobalt mines, and the over a million indirectly involved through trade and transport are being taken advantage of. From the working conditions in the mines, to the displacement of villages for mining purposes, the multifaceted impacts of the cobalt extraction on the Congolese people reverberate across various facets of life. This problem has been going on for about 100 years now.This problem will continue to worsen as the requirement of electric vehicles and other rechargeable batteries are needed with newer technologies.

This problem affects the whole world and more importantly the people of the DRC.

Currently, the organizations that are working to try and improve this situation are UNICEF and the UN Refugee Agency and other humanitarian organizations. They support this cause by bringing awareness and donations to help those suffering. This problem will take many years to solve as it has many different parts that are interconnected that need to be solved together.

**What is the Nature of this problem**

The nature of the problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in relation to the extraction of cobalt is complex. There are several interconnected issues:

* Work conditions: Thousand of families, whose children, husbands, spouses have suffered horrific injuries. (Gross, 2023). Many miners created “100,000 to 15,00 tunnels”(Gross,2023) by hand without proper supports, ventilation shafts, rock bolts, or anything like that. Many tunnels have collapsed, burying everyone in the mines, including children.
* Child labor: Children as young as seven or eight are involved in the mining process, facing dangerous conditions and impacting their wellbeing, education, and development.
* Environmental impact: Cobalt mining has caused major environmental degradation. Many forests have been cut down for space for mines and the improper waste disposal leads to water and soil contamination.
* Displacement of communities: Because of mining activities, many local communities have been displaced. Many villages are sometimes relocated to make way for mining operations, disrupting the lives and livelihood of those affected. (Amnesty International,2023)
* Economic challenges: Cobalt is a valuable resource, its extraction hasn’t translated into significant economic benefits for the local population. There are the issues of corruption and unfair distribution of wealth that can exacerbate economic challenges in the region.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the web of challenges surrounding cobalt extraction in the Democratic Republic of Congo demands urgent attention and realistic solutions. Looking at the past 100 years, it has become evident that the exploration of the congolese people for their labor in cobalt mining, with estimated 200,000 direct workers and over a million indirectly involved through trade and transport. The global demand for cobalt, driven by technologies like rechargeable batteries, threaten to exacerbate these problems in the coming years. Organizations such as UNICEF and the UN Refugee Agency, have taken up the mantle to bring awareness and support to those suffering.

**References**

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