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**Blood diamonds, gold and copper: over a million children's lives endangered by mining**

While the film “**Blood Diamond**” is receiving acclaim around the world, more than one million children are risking death or severe injury and missing out on school because they are working in mines. Sierra Leone, where “**Blood Diamond**” is set, is one of over 50 countries in the world where children are exploited daily in the hazardous mining of minerals, including diamonds.

- Across the Sahel region of Africa, in countries such as Niger and Burkina Faso, around 200,000 children are working in small-scale gold and mineral mines and quarries, over one-third of the total industry workforce.

- In Democratic Republic of Congo, an estimated 40,000 children are working deep underground, mining for minerals including diamonds, gold, copper and cobalt.

- In the Philippines, nearly 18,000 children are involved in gold, silver and copper mining.

Mining is one of the most deadly forms of child labour, with children as young as five working long hours in unbearable conditions. Children are forced to spend long hours deep underground in badly constructed mines that are often at risk of collapse. They may be employed to dive into rivers and flooded tunnels, or as moles to access small, dangerous spaces. Hundreds of thousands of others spend their days around the mines, breaking and carrying rocks or processing ore, often handling highly dangerous minerals and exposed to blistering heat and dust.

Mining violates the rights of all children involved, whether above or below ground. In addition to the physical danger of mining, the children's health is severely threatened by soil, water and air contaminated with heavy metals. Child miners are unable to attend school, and often have no access to clean drinking water or healthcare.

Many exist in fear of the violence, crime and prostitution that is notoriously rife in isolated mining areas.

Margaret Douglas, Chief Executive, Save the Children Australia:

"It is unthinkable that so many children are still being exposed to such acute danger in mines around the world. Wherever there is informal mining there are children risking their lives, health and futures. Children can't wait. Urgent action is needed to make sure they are properly protected from the perils of mining."

Save the Children is calling on:

- all governments to eliminate child labour in mining as a matter of urgency.
- the mining industry to establish meaningful and practical measures to ensure children are not exploited and protected in and around their mining sites.
- mining companies to actively support initiatives to improve the working conditions and livelihoods of families involved in informal mining.

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