

# The Human Cost Of Cobalt

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# Why this matters?

**70%**

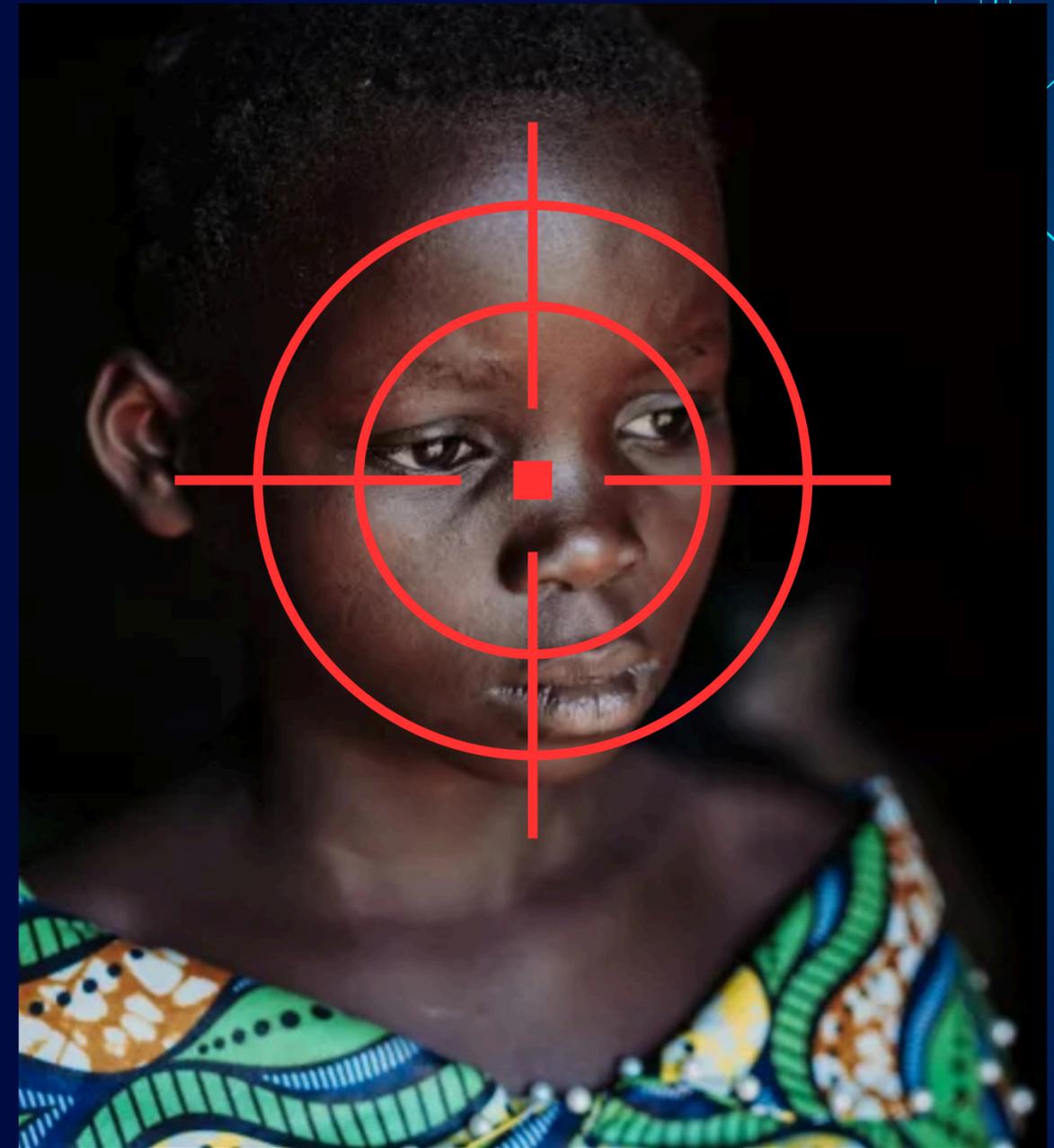
Of the world's cobalt that is used in phones, laptops, and EVs is produced in Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Sociology

Helps us understand this issue from a social viewpoint and not only as numbers, but as the reality of structure, power and global inequality.

## Child Labor

Exploitation, reproductive harm, and environmental destruction is tied of the mining of minerals like cobalt and copper.



# Some theories to consider

01

## Conflict Theory

Society consists of groups with conflicting interests competing over scarce resources like wealth, power, and status.  
Wealthy nations and corporations exploit the labor of the poor for profit.

03

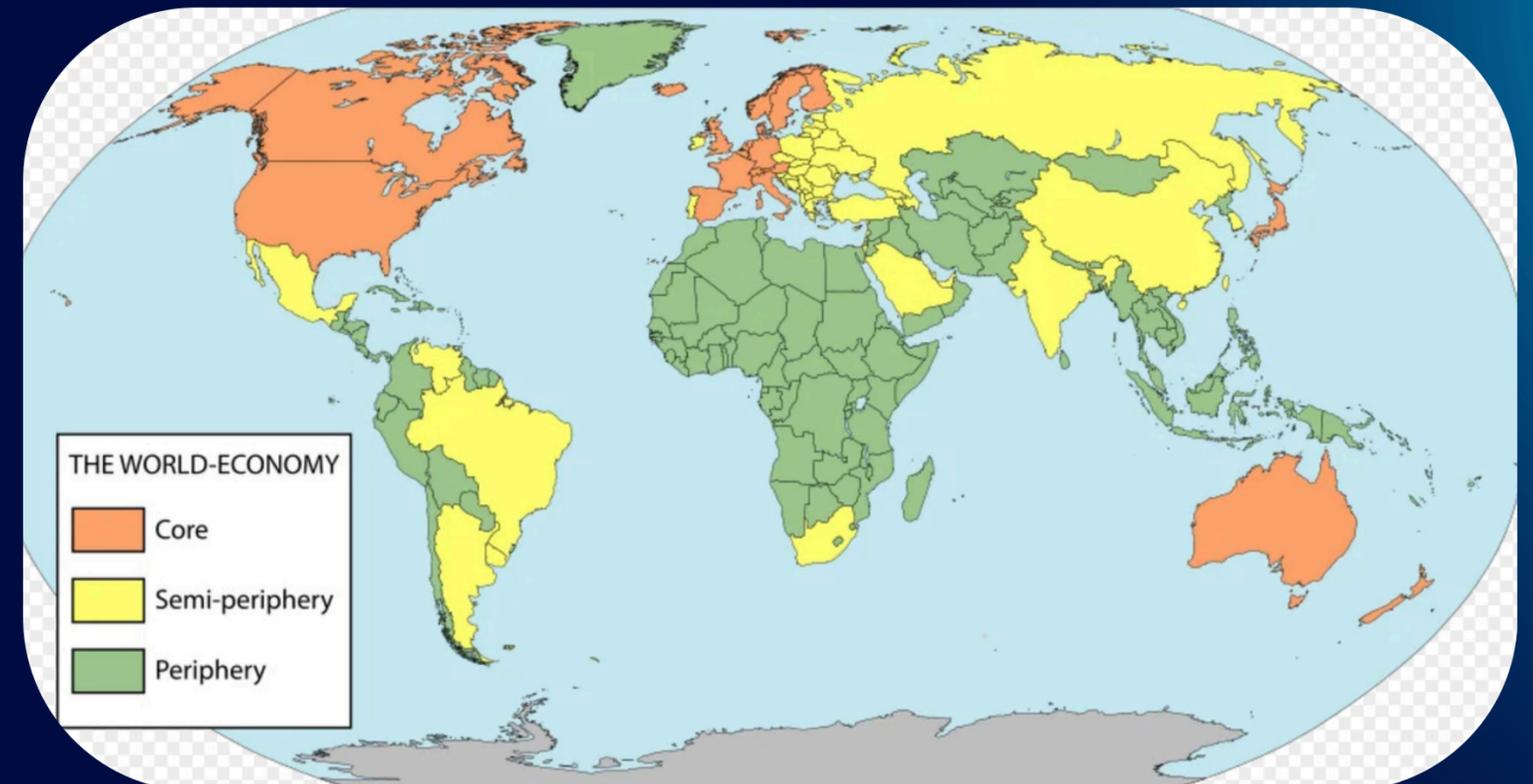
## Structural Violence Theory

Social structures like poverty, corruption, weak government harm the Congolese people indirectly.

02

## World-Systems Theory

Congo a smaller, peripheral nation being exploited by core nations like U.S, Germany, and China.





# Child Labor & Exploitation

Systemic inequality, social structures like poverty, and lack of opportunity force children to be burden with continuous cycles of exploitation.



- Over 40,000 children, some as young as seven, work in cobalt mines.
- Conditions: long hours, no protective gear, risk of collapse and toxic exposure.
- Poverty and lack of schooling force families to depend on this labor.



# Gender and Environmental Impacts

## INTERSECTIONALITY!!!!

Gender, class, and environment overlap in the exploitation of the Congolese people.

1. Women miners face health risks: miscarriages, birth defects, and infections due to polluted environments.
2. Communities suffer from poisoned water, soil, and food supplies.
3. Both children and women living off the wages they earn from their suffering.



# Forced Evictions and Violence

Entire communities were bulldozed to expand cobalt and copper mines with little to no warning.

Toxic runoff and polluted have risked the health of the people and made farmland unusable, deepening poverty and hunger.

Some families received no compensation and others who did, were did not receive enough to buy equal quality homes.

Amnesty reports violence and sexual assaults during evictions by forces.



These abuses reveal structural violence, a system where the Congolese poor are sacrificed for global “green energy” profits.

# Global Inequality

- Workers earn 30 pence/hour while tech giants make billions.
- U.S. appeals court absolved companies like Apple, Tesla, and Microsoft of direct responsibility at the expense of sufferance of millions.
- European and American car brands (Tesla, VW, BMW, Mercedes, Volvo) all rely on Congolese cobalt.
- Neocolonialism: modern exploitation masked by global capitalism and “green energy” marketing.



# Global Exploitation

Global capitalism creates separate systems of discrimination impacting minorities differently.

- Forced labor and child mining aren't limited to Congo but they exist across Bolivia, Indonesia, Zambia and many other countries.
- Shifting production doesn't solve exploitation; it just relocates it.





# Possible Solutions



**Strengthening labor and environmental standards where mining happens.**

**Increase transparency and accountability in global supply chains.**

**Support NGOs providing education and alternative income to families.**

**More mining for metals in the U.S. with stricter regulations as part of the solution**

We must switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy but our push for green energy and tech has a dark side of forced labor and human rights abuses. And simply cutting off sourcing from places like the DRC doesn't fix the problem but it often just shifts suffering elsewhere. Here are some possible solutions



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