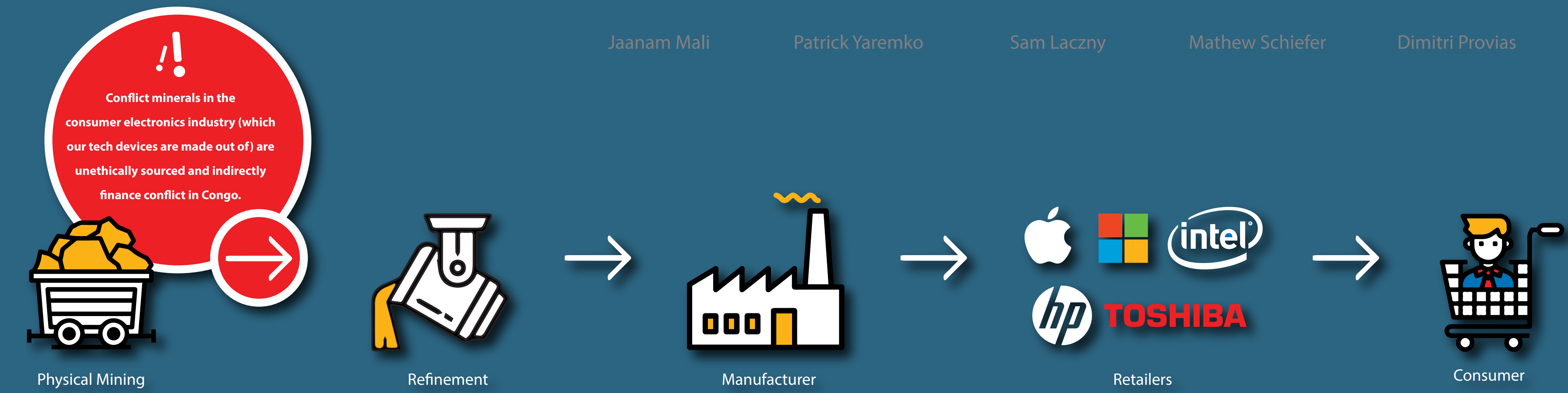


Conflict Minerals

Charging Positive Change



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Abstract

The Problem

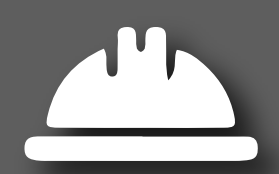
A variety of minerals such as tin, tungsten, tantalum, and gold (collectively known as 3TG) make up components in our electronic devices. Many of these minerals are unethically sourced and indirectly finance conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Mines in this region are controlled by armed groups who exploit local congolese to mine these minerals for them and smuggle them out of the country illegally. They are then sold into the supply chains of multinational companies who use them to produce consumer electronics. Increased demand for electronic devices and in turn minerals, continues to finance weapons of the armed groups and ability to exploit locals. This has led to massacres, high rates of sexual violence and violations of human rights. Sustainability initiatives to resolve this problem have focused around 4 central areas:

- (1) Conducting Conflict Minerals Sourcing Due Diligence and Reporting
- (2) Developing a Conflict-Free Minerals Trade and Sourcing Conflict-Free Minerals from Congo
- (3) Supporting and Improving Livelihoods for Artisanal Mining Communities in Eastern Congo
- (4) Conflict-Free Minerals Advocacy

Conflict Timeline

- 1994: The end of the Rwanda genocide where Hutu (enemies of the Tutsi) and Interahamwe rebels were forced out of Rwanda. The remaining Interahamwe rebels fled to the modern Democratic Republic of Congo, where they still operate today [2].
- 1996-1997: DRC President Mobutu flees the country and rebel leader Laurent-Desire Kabila declares himself president [2].
- 1998: Kabila loses his support due to corruption and orders Rwandan and Ugandan allies out of the country which led to the Congo war [2].
- 2001: UN cites the theft of gold, diamonds, timber and coltan as reason the conflict is prolonged [2].
- 2003: Congo war officially ends, however the conflict in eastern Congo continues due to the trade of conflict minerals [2].
- 2007: Blood Coltan documentary is released and highlights the issue of conflict minerals to the public
- 2010: Enough Project releases first company rankings for sustainability related to conflict minerals in the consumer electronics and jewellery industries
- 2010 to Today: UN peacekeepers are unable to prevent all the massacres and rape by multiple armed groups that are made up of rebels, government troops and militias as a result of the war [2]. Companies implement varying degrees of sustainable initiatives to limit their impact on the conflict mineral trade

Recommendations



Creating formal and internationally run artisanal mining programs in Congo to mitigate political issues from impacting and controlling these programs [1]. Locals can practice, be trained and employed. Electronic companies creating ethical employment programs cuts out the untraceable funding, which ends up in the hands of the armed groups.



Employ those of armed groups, who have also had their human rights violated. Provide them the opportunity to have protection and a source of revenue through ethical working conditions. This would lower the number of armed groups as well as protect violence against civilians.



Electronic companies have the resources to closely collaborate and create jobs for suppliers in Congo, whereas the lack of capital resources in Congo has led to mass corruption. Establishing such projects allows a company to start from the bottom of their supply chain to help the planet. However, to keep in mind the political instability occurring in Congo makes it difficult for businesses to operate efficiently in accordance with the policies in place [1].



Electronic recycling that retracts minerals for reuse. Conduct audits to ensure proper standards are being met and that bribes are not being accepted by auditors.



[1] Simmons, G. L. (2014). Conflict Minerals - Responsible Sourcing Issues and Factors Impacting SEC Rule. Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
 [2] Timeline: The Congo in Conflict. Retrieved from: <https://www.huntingdoninstitute.org/articles/Timeline-The-Congo-in-Conflict-2010>
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Intel
 Intel is committed to the responsible sourcing of minerals – sourcing done in an ethical and sustainable manner that safeguards the human rights of everyone in our global supply chain. Intel commits to:
 Exercise due diligence with relevant suppliers consistent with the OCED Guidance.
 Collaborate with customers, suppliers and industry associations such as the Responsible Minerals Initiative (RMI) on long-term solutions to enable responsible sourcing.
 Commit to transparency in the implementation of this policy by making available reports on their progress to relevant stakeholders and the public

Toshiba
 Not currently reporting on or participating in 3rd Party Audits of Smelters & Refineries
 Not providing any evidence to claims that they are using conflict-free minerals
 Not providing financial support beyond membership fee to industry organizations aimed at fighting conflict mineral trade in Congo
 No initiatives aimed at improving the livelihood of local Congolese population
 Very little advocacy for conflict-free minerals
 No conflict minerals report on website or filed with SEC

Microsoft
 Microsoft has been criticized for the perceived lack of accountability for their suppliers who source their minerals. They have started to audit their suppliers and abide by the Supplier Code of Conduct and the Conflict Mineral Reporting Template. 4 Africa was launched by Microsoft in 2013 to deliver affordable access to the internet, develop skilled workforces and investing in technology solutions. This program's impact has led to economic development, inclusive growth and increase in technological capabilities. Microsoft's future:
 -Digital tech to improve supply chain info and risk mitigation
 -Increase use of external data sources to identify raw material risks in CAHRAs
 -Further engagement with organizations such as IRMA, ARM and Pact to establish responsible sourcing standards in the supply chain.

Apple
 Reports have indicated that Apple is currently the most progressive company in terms of using conflict free minerals. They have accomplished minimizing conflict minerals through organizations like the enough project and funds for global human rights. These organizations recommend and implement policies to reduce corruption in Congo; support social campaigns; provide women and child safety funds; and provide education and skills beyond mining for locals.

Hewlett Packard
 HP is rated one of the highest sustainable electronics companies in term of conflic minerals and sustainable practices in general. They have identified the points of their complex supply chain where conflict minerals are typically inducted. HP has stated a zero tolerance for conflict minerals in their products, however claim to have a "relatively small influence" over this supply chain and therefor are working to get the rest of the industry on board.
 Hp Promotes conflict-free minerals by:
 - Encouraging third-party sourcing audits
 - Requiring their suppliers to purchase solely from audited smelters
 - Supporting multi-stakeholder collaboration on the issue