

Children labour rife in Madagascar mica mining sector

Mica from Madagascar is mined by children aged as young as five years old in dangerous conditions, [research](#) by Terre des Hommes has found. While most of the mineral is destined for China, there are no safeguards preventing the exported mica from ending up in products from Western companies.



Image: Jan-Joseph Stok/Terre des Hommes

Researchers found that entire families are employed in quarrying and processing the mica mineral. In Madagascar, mica is mainly mined in the poor south. The percentage of children between the ages of 5-17 that are working varies between 56 and 62% in the three main mica regions. They estimate the total number of mica workers to be 22,000, at least half of which are minors (at least 11,000).

Artisanal mining

Madagascar is the third-largest mica exporter in the world. It has overtaken India as the largest exporter of sheet mica, the form mainly used in the electronics and automotive industries. The mica is cut out by hand and the debris is further processed and split manually. Several of the mica mining sites that were examined did not have a licence, and its extracted using artisanal, non-industrial methods.

With a minimum price of 4 euro cents per kilo, the (mostly underage) miners receive less than half of what is paid per kilo in India. Mica exports from Madagascar has increased by a factor of 30 since 2008, however, the price per ton has dropped significantly, suggesting severe exploitation.

Export to China

Eighty-seven percent of Madagascan mica from is transported by boat to China and ends up in products of companies such as Panasonic (Japan), Fujikura (Japanese wiring and cables company for the electronics, telecom and automotive industries), Prysmian Group (cable manufacturer, merger of the Dutch Draka and the Italian Prysmian), Van Roll and Isovolta (both with a Swiss holding) and Fujikura (Japanese electronics group). Customers of these companies also run the risk of being linked to child labour in their supply chain.

Terre des Hommes finds that the business community fails to conduct due diligence with regard to child labour in its products, and calls on electronics companies and the automotive industry to find out the origin of the mica in their products.

Companies cannot accept the risk of worst forms of child labour.

Government of Madagascar

Researchers met with officials at the Ministry of Mining, who are understanding , but lack the resources and capacity for adequate monitoring. Madagascar is a vulnerable country, which is ranked 161 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index .

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>