Call for Funding: Scaling Cobalt and Copper ASM Mine Monitoring Program for Systemic Impact in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

What Is Better Mining: An ASM mine monitoring program that collects and analyses digital responsible sourcing data on ASM sites and translates this data into quantifiable improvements on and around those sites.

Objectives:
- Support company due diligence and local exporter go-to-market objectives
- Support ongoing sector formalization pilot projects.
- Achieve positive, systemic impact through offering Corrective Action Plan (CAP) and improvement monitoring for ASM sites.
- Help cobalt refiners fulfill assurance requirements for on-the-ground assessments and monitoring.

Proof of Concept and Rollout:
- Conceptualized and successfully piloted by international responsible sourcing specialists RCS Global Group in 2018 after success in 3TG since 2015.
- Deployed to 3 cobalt and copper ASM sites since January 2019.
- Early support from two downstream companies (2019/2020).
- Funding secured to scale to 6 sites in 2020 with RMI support. RMI and RCS Global are actively identifying 3 additional candidate sites for 2020.
- Objective to reach 12 sites over next two years.

Impact So Far: Quantifiable reduction of risks and improvement of conditions achieved across all sites.

How it Works:
RCS Global monitoring agents equipped with the Better Mining smartphone application regularly record ESG data related to site-level incidents, risks, impacts, and socio-economic indicators. This data is analyzed by RCS Global’s international expert team and translated into monthly Corrective Action Plans (CAPs). CAPs are workshopped with mining operators on-site, assigned correctly for local accountability and monitored for implementation. The data is provided to the RMI and supply chain participants to support refiner and downstream due diligence efforts as well as ASM improvements.

Outputs:
- Baseline assessments of each site against an OECD-aligned and RMI-recognized methodology.
- Quarterly Reports with aggregated data on risks and CAPs provided to RMI members.
- CAPs workshopped with mining operators, who are encouraged to share CAPs with customers to meet due diligence expectations.
- Quarterly webinar to present results, successes, challenges, and needs with RMI members.

Support opportunity packages:
1.6 million needed in US$ for 2 years (combined 2021/2022)

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Key outcomes for RMI members
- Become a recognized leader by supporting risk mitigation and positive impact generation at ASM sites
- Receive data from cobalt and copper ASM sites that supports supply chain due diligence and public reporting
- Support CAP closure for cobalt refiners sourcing ASM-produced material
- Improved understanding of risk and socio-economic realities and trends related to ASM
- Opportunity to learn about and provide input on best practices for upstream engagement and effective risk mitigation

Platinum
250k / year
Support 3+ sites

Gold
150k / year
Support 2 sites

Silver
75k / year
Support 1 site

Bronze
50k / year
Support site start-up

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Frequently Asked Questions

Does Better Mining implement mine site improvements itself?
RCS Global and the RMI believe that monitoring should be independent of the implementation of mine site improvement measures. Better Mining does not implement mine formalization and corrective actions itself and focuses on recommending CAPs to the appropriate stakeholder/supply chain partners and monitoring the progress and impact of mine site improvements based on the CAPs recommended.

How are mine site improvements funded?
To support these longer-term and more capital-intensive investments, a Technical Assistance fund would be leveraged that will recruit financial support from a wide-variety of government and private sector actors. The Fund is envisioned to exclusively focused on capital-intensive measures that cannot feasibly be financed by the local stakeholder / supply chain configuration. Otherwise, site improvement measures are expected to be implemented by site operators or other supply chain partners.

How does Better Mining plan to coordinate and collaborate with pilot projects focused on formalization?
RCS Global and the RMI believe collaboration is imperative. Better Mining is an avenue for existing or planned ASM formalization projects to demonstrate continuous improvement on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data collected through an industry-approved and OECD-aligned monitoring mechanism. Better Mining is therefore a fundamentally complementary effort to formalization projects. Outreach to existing pilot initiatives is coordinated by the RMI and is underway.

How does Better Mining ensure the accuracy and integrity of data?
Data is collected in a digital format against an OECD-aligned and RMI-recognized methodology through a bespoke smartphone application, which allows for the implementation of consistent and robust data verification. RCS Global’s international expert team reviews raw data based on experience of digitally monitoring ASM mine sites in the African Great Lakes region since 2015. This includes verifying supporting evidence and comparing data with data trends from past months of monitoring. Anomalies are queried. Monitoring agents are trained on integrity and anti-corruption and deployed to mine sites on a rotational basis, meaning they stay on specific mine sites for a maximum of 3 months at a time. Quarterly reporting includes observations on data quality and completeness and any limitations. Better Mining will cease monitoring sites where there are threats to personnel safety or integrity that cannot be appropriately managed.

Who can use the monitoring data?
The RMI and its membership and RCS Global can use the Quarterly Reports that cover an aggregated analysis of risks and CAP progress. The raw data is stored securely on RCS servers under respect of RMI and external data storage provisions. CAPs are available for use by the RMI membership and RCS Global, while consideration is also given to supply chain participants/operators who wish to share CAPs to support market acceptance/downstream due diligence.

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