



Business & Human Rights
Resource Centre

Transition Minerals Tracker

GLOBAL ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES & PRACTICES

Background

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre's [Transition Minerals Tracker](#) monitors the human rights policies and practices of companies mining six key commodities vital to the clean energy transition: cobalt, copper, lithium, manganese, nickel and zinc. Extraction of these six minerals – core components for renewable energy technology like electric vehicles and solar panels – is expected to [rise dramatically](#) with the growing demand for these renewable energy technologies. Yet many of the companies producing these minerals are beset with allegations of human rights abuse.

The scope of the Tracker has been expanded to include companies responsible for a majority of global production of each of these minerals. We track allegations of abuse in six categories across 47 indicators drawn from the salient risks in the sector, in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs).

Key findings & analysis

The Tracker researched the practices of 103 companies who hold a majority market share in one of the six commodities. Between 2010 and 2020 a total of 276 allegations of human rights abuses were identified. Nearly half (49) of these companies have a publicly available human rights policy. Nevertheless, 51 of these companies have an allegation of human rights abuse – indicating a significant disconnect between policy and practice.

While 18 companies account for 80% of allegations recorded, the remainder of the allegations were spread across all six minerals and geographic regions, suggesting abuse is widespread in the sector.

Transition Mineral Tracker Allegations

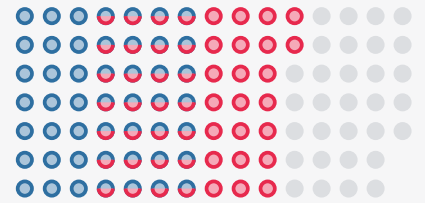
NUMBER OF ALLEGATIONS BY CATEGORY



103 companies researched

49 have a human rights policy

51 have human rights abuse allegations

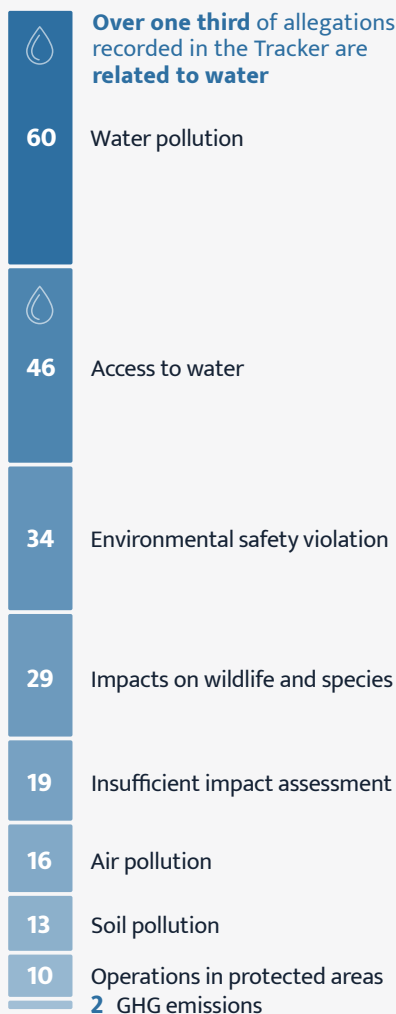


There are 276 allegations recorded in the tracker. One allegation may include multiple human rights impacts.

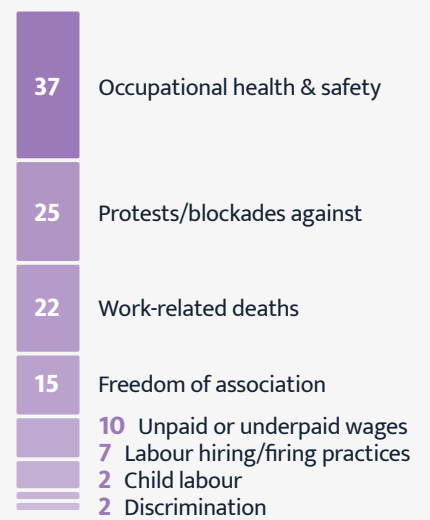
302 COMMUNITY IMPACTS



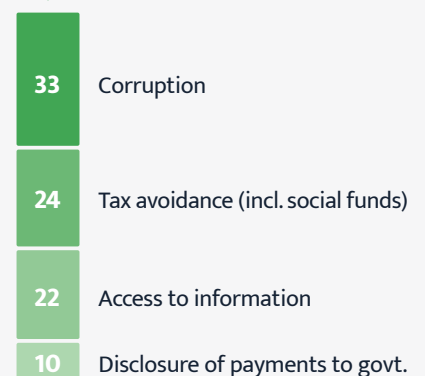
229 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS



120 IMPACTS ON WORKERS



89 GOVERNANCE & TRANSPARENCY



39 SECURITY & CONFLICT ZONES



17 COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Silencing community dissent

According to our Tracker data, the highest number of allegations involve impacts and attacks on local communities, civil society organisations and their leaders (125 allegations). This correlates with findings from our [Human Rights Defenders \(HRD\) database](#) which shows over a third (36%) of all HRD attacks relate to the extractive sector. In 33 cases (one in eight or 12%) communities responded through protests, marches, strikes or blockades against a mine, indicating the high level of frustration within communities. Community consultation and consent is vital to ensuring that renewable energy projects that facilitate the urgent energy transition to address the climate crisis benefit both the global and local populations, yet the Tracker shows that **one in eight human rights abuses recorded in transition minerals features a community protesting**. The lack of consent adversely affects Indigenous communities, who are on the front lines of both the climate crisis as well as the abuse and encroachment of their land by extractives and renewable energy companies. **One in 10 (10%) allegations recorded in the Tracker relate to Indigenous rights**.

Water is a human right

Allegations of environmental impact continue to be a major source of abuse among companies producing transition minerals. Our first global analysis in August 2019 found that environmental impacts, access to water and health impacts were the top three allegations recorded. Even with this expanded data set, those same types of abuse feature most heavily, with nearly nine in 10 (89%) environmental-related allegations connected to water rights. Mining is water intensive. Inequality of power leaves communities with dry water sources and farmland. Water pollution represents one-fifth (22%) of all allegations, with access to water accounting for one in six allegations (17%). Together, **over one third (38%) of allegations recorded in the Tracker are related to water**. In addition,

17 of 38 allegations related to health impacts also featured an allegation related to access to water or water pollution. To explore the role of water and the rights of communities in a fair and fast energy transition you can read our case study [here](#).

Who benefits?

A quarter, 68 of the 276 allegations relate to governance and transparency. Almost half of these are allegations of corruption, including payments to governments, use of influence and lobbying and mismanagement of funds. An additional 28 are allegations of tax avoidance, which includes the failure to pay into social community funds as required by laws or contracts for mineral exploitation.

Workers' rights

A quarter, 68 of the 276 allegations relate to workers' rights, and of those **just over half are about occupational health and safety (54%)**. This year we began monitoring allegations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included 12 allegations among the companies in this Tracker, most of which related to worker health and safety. While this is not an exhaustive list of violations related to COVID-19 in the mining sector, due to the small scope of commodities in the data set, it does give a snapshot of the abuses that have taken place in the sector since March 2020.

Conclusion

The need for decarbonisation is urgent. But allegations recorded in the [Transition Minerals Tracker](#) highlight that human rights abuses in the supply chain for renewable energy technologies could jeopardise this. By introducing measures to end these harms now, we can secure a future not only where a net zero carbon economy is achieved but where all peoples benefit from a sector that is rights respecting and sustainable.