2026-1476 IJOI
https://www.ijoi-online.org/

International Journal of Organizational Innovation

THE MOBILONG DIAMOND MINING PROJECT IN CAMEROON: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE

Julius Anyu
School of Business and Public Administration
University of the District of Columbia
jndumbe@udc.edu

Abstract

Cameroon possesses significant alluvial diamond resources, with 41 documented occurrences along the eastern frontier and an estimated potential of 3 to 5 million carats. Despite this endowment, the diamond mining sector has been characterized by governance failures, speculative ventures, environmental degradation, and limited benefits for local communities. This paper provides a critical analysis of diamond mining in Cameroon, tracing the history of the Mobilong diamond project and the C&K Mining scandal to expose the risks of inadequate resource verification. Drawing on the 2023 reassessment by Spaggiari, which revealed an average diamond grade of only 0.09 ct/m³—far below the breakeven grade of 1.5 ct/m³—the paper evaluates the economic viability of Cameroon's diamond deposits and argues that sustainable governance, rather than speculative extraction, must anchor the sector's future.

Environmental consequences, including deforestation, mercury contamination, and biodiversity loss in ecologically sensitive regions adjacent to the Congo Basin, are examined alongside social impacts such as community displacement, labor exploitation, and child labor. The paper assesses Cameroon's participation in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, highlighting persistent traceability challenges rooted in pervasive informality. The December 2023 Mining Code and the establishment of the Société Nationale des Mines represent important governance reforms, yet implementation gaps persist. The paper concludes with integrated reform recommendations addressing digital traceability, community benefit-sharing, environmental restoration, and institutional capacity building, arguing that sustainable diamond mining requires a governance framework that balances economic development, environmental protection, and social justice.

Keywords: diamond mining, Cameroon, Kimberley Process, artisanal and small-scale mining, sustainable governance, resource curse

Introduction

Cameroon, located at the crossroads of West and Central Africa, is endowed with a diverse portfolio of mineral resources, including gold, bauxite, iron ore, cobalt, and diamonds. The country's mineral wealth has long been recognized as a potential catalyst for economic development, yet the mining sector contributes only approximately 1% of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) despite this significant endowment (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2026). Among Cameroon's mineral resources, diamonds occupy a particularly complex position, intertwining economic promise with governance challenges, environmental risks, and social justice concerns. The Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development (MINMIDT) has documented 41 alluvial diamond occurrences along the Batouri-Yaoundé-Ebolowa cross-border line, with an estimated potential of 3 to 5 million carats (MINMIDT, 2023a).

Diamond mining in Cameroon intersects with critical dimensions of environmental stewardship, social justice, and governance in ways that reflect broader challenges facing resource-rich developing nations across the continent (Bridge, 2004; Le Billon, 2008). The extraction of alluvial diamonds, primarily through artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operations, has resulted in significant deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and mercury contamination in ecologically sensitive areas of the East Region (Intergovernmental Forum on Mining [IGF], 2025). Simultaneously, local communities—particularly Indigenous populations and rural farmers—have borne disproportionate social costs, including displacement from ancestral lands, loss of agricultural livelihoods, and exposure to hazardous working conditions (Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim [RELUFA], 2025). These impacts are compounded by weak regulatory oversight, limited institutional capacity, and persistent challenges in implementing international transparency standards such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS).

This paper argues that sustainable diamond mining in Cameroon requires an integrated governance framework that simultaneously addresses institutional weaknesses, environmental degradation, community rights, and international compliance. The analysis proceeds through five interconnected dimensions: the historical trajectory of speculative mining ventures exemplified by the Mobilong project; the scientific reassessment of diamond resource viability; the environmental and biodiversity consequences of mining in the Congo Basin periphery; the social costs borne by local communities; and the governance architecture—including Kimberley Process compliance and the December 2023 Mining Code—that shapes sector outcomes. By examining these dimensions as components of a single governance challenge rather than as discrete problems, the paper identifies pathways toward a more equitable and sustainable approach to diamond resource management.

History of the Mobilong Diamond Project

The history of diamond exploration in Cameroon dates to the 1930s, when diamond placers along the country's eastern frontier with the Central African Republic (CAR) were first discovered (Spaggiari, 2023). These alluvial deposits, dispersed intermittently across Quaternary sediments in the East Region, attracted periodic exploration interest but were never developed on a commercial industrial scale. Instead, diamond extraction remained the province of artisanal miners who employed traditional methods to work the small, scattered placers in the Kadey and Boumba-et-Ngoko Departments (RELUFA, 2022). ASM operators, typically working with rudimentary tools and minimal regulatory oversight, established informal economies around diamond recovery that persisted for decades—a pattern that would later complicate efforts to formalize the sector. It was not until the early 2000s that concerted efforts were made to evaluate the industrial potential of these deposits, culminating in the Mobilong alluvial diamond field near Yokadouma.

The Mobilong diamond project emerged as a joint venture between Cameroon and South Korea through C&K Mining (Cameroon & Korea Mining Inc.), a company led by chairman Oh Deok-gyun. In December 2010, the resource was reported to the Korean stock exchange (KOSDAQ) as containing approximately 736 million carats—a figure based on research reports later found to be exaggerated and misleading (J. Ndumbe Anyu & Samuel Moki, 2013). This announcement, amplified by a press release from the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) led by Energy and Resources Ambassador Kim Eun-seok, triggered a dramatic surge in CNK International's share price, which multiplied by approximately 4.6 times within 16 days. By 2013, the resource estimate had been revised to 416 million carats with an annual production capacity of 0.8 million carats, but the overvaluation had already precipitated a stock market scandal in Seoul (Business in Cameroon, 2014).

The scandal's legal aftermath exposed the depth of governance failures on both sides. Chairman Oh was convicted of breach of fiduciary duty, receiving three years in prison and five years of probation. Ambassador Kim faced accusations of insider trading, though these charges were ultimately dropped (Wikipedia, 2024). Critically, the Cameroonian government was directly implicated through CAPAM's (Cadre d'Appui et de Promotion de l'Artisanat Minier) 10% stake in C&K Mining, raising fundamental questions about conflicts of interest in mining oversight (Freudenthal, 2016). In 2014, majority interest was sold to a Chinese-American investor based in Hong Kong, and by 2016 the deposit was under revaluation (Business in Cameroon, 2014; Mbodiam, 2016).

As Freudenthal (2016) observed in an investigative report for African Arguments, Mobilong exemplifies "virtual mining" in Cameroon—a pattern whereby speculative projects attract investment based on inflated resource estimates, enrich intermediaries, and collapse before generating sustainable benefits for the national economy or local communities. The Mobilong case is not

merely a historical curiosity; it constitutes a cautionary archetype that underscores the critical importance of independent resource verification, transparent governance, and robust regulatory oversight in preventing resource-rich developing nations from falling prey to speculative exploitation.

Exploration Reports and Resource Assessment

The scientific understanding of Cameroon's diamond resources has evolved significantly since the initial discoveries of the 1930s, with successive exploration campaigns producing increasingly refined—and progressively more sobering—assessments of economic potential. Early exploration activities in the 1980s employed manually directed methods, using hand-dug pits and limited sample volumes to estimate diamond grades across the alluvial fields of eastern Cameroon. These campaigns, while confirming the presence of diamonds, relied on unrepresentatively small gravel sample volumes that proved inadequate for reliable grade estimation (Spaggiari, 2023). The resulting overestimates contributed to inflated expectations that would later fuel speculative investment in ventures such as Mobilong, illustrating how methodological inadequacies can generate misleading resource estimates with serious financial and governance consequences.

A landmark reassessment published by Renato Spaggiari in the *Journal of African Earth Sciences* transformed understanding of the Mobilong field's true potential. Drawing on data from mechanical mining and bulk trench sampling campaigns that yielded substantially greater gravel volumes than earlier manual exploration, Spaggiari (2023) conducted a modern reassessment of the placer's sedimentology and diamond potential. The results were definitive: the Mobilong alluvial field exhibited an average diamond grade of only 0.09 ct/m³, dramatically below the breakeven grade of approximately 1.5 ct/m³ required for commercially viable alluvial diamond mining. Spaggiari concluded that the field is "overall a low-volume, small-diamond and uneconomic placer" (p. 1), with higher concentrations confined to localized areas rather than distributed across the broader deposit.

The study attributed this low potential to two principal factors: the limited availability of diamonds from secondary detrital sources and the inefficiency of fluvial mechanisms in promoting diamond concentration within the alluvial system. Analysis of the diamond population revealed characteristics suggesting multiple recycling events, with notable similarities to diamonds from the Carnot alluvial field in the neighboring CAR (Spaggiari, 2023). Significantly, kimberlite occurrences—the primary igneous source rocks for diamonds—remain unknown in both Cameroon and the CAR. Instead, Proterozoic and Cretaceous sedimentary successions are considered the detrital hosts, having accumulated diamonds through multiple erosional and depositional cycles over geological time. This geological context fundamentally constrains expectations: without primary kimberlite sources, Cameroon's alluvial diamond fields are

unlikely to yield the concentrations necessary for large-scale commercial viability.

Spaggiari (2023) also provided practical guidance for future exploration, recommending that campaigns prioritize older gravel units overlying hard bedrock, where natural trap-site mechanisms may have concentrated diamonds more effectively. The contrast between the manually directed exploration of the 1980s and modern bulk-sampling approaches delivers a broader methodological lesson about the relationship between sampling rigor and governance outcomes—a lesson made urgent by the C&K Mining scandal's demonstration that unreliable geological data can cascade into financial fraud, diplomatic incidents, and institutional damage.

Environmental Impact and Biodiversity Consequences

Diamond mining in Cameroon, conducted predominantly through ASM operations, has generated significant environmental consequences across the ecologically sensitive landscapes of the East Region. The primary impacts include deforestation from clearing forested land for mining sites and access roads; soil erosion caused by the removal of vegetation cover and disturbance of alluvial sediments; water pollution from sedimentation, turbidity increases, and chemical contamination; and the discharge of toxic substances, particularly mercury, used in gold recovery processes that frequently co-occur with diamond mining (IGF, 2025). The IGF reported that Cameroon's artisanal miners commonly use toxic chemicals such as cyanide and mercury for mineral recovery, discharging effluent into waterways and contributing to deteriorating water quality and adverse health impacts on local populations. Open-water processing methods result in estimated losses of approximately 50% during gold recovery, representing both resource waste and ongoing environmental contamination (IGF, 2025).

The environmental regulatory framework has undergone significant strengthening in recent years. The December 2023 Mining Code (Law No. 2023/014, 2023) established three dedicated mining funds, including the Mining Site and Quarry Restoration, Rehabilitation and Closure Fund, designed to finance environmental conservation and rehabilitation programs. Building on this legislative foundation, Cameroon has set stricter environmental and financial conditions for mining, requiring more stringent environmental impact assessments (EIAs) before project approval (Business in Cameroon, 2026a). Mining companies must now demonstrate commitment to minimizing ecological damage and restoring affected areas, while higher royalties and taxes are designed to ensure fairer distribution of profits between the state and extractive operators. The IGF's 2024 capacity-building workshop in Yaoundé, attended by 16 key officials from MINMIDT, included training on mine waste management, site rehabilitation, and mercury-free mining techniques—reflecting growing institutional recognition of the need for enhanced environmental governance (IGF, 2025).

Biodiversity Threats in the Congo Basin Periphery

The environmental dimensions of diamond mining assume particular gravity given the ecological significance of eastern Cameroon. The East Region, where the majority of diamond mining occurs, is situated adjacent to the Congo Basin—the world's second-largest tropical rainforest ecosystem and a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot (Laurance et al., 2012). Mining activities disrupt wildlife habitats through direct land clearance, noise pollution, water contamination, and the fragmentation of forest corridors essential for the movement and genetic exchange of wildlife populations. The conversion of forested land to mining sites creates permanent habitat loss, while sedimentation and chemical contamination degrade aquatic ecosystems supporting diverse fish assemblages and riparian species (Edwards et al., 2014).

ASM communities in eastern Cameroon frequently engage in bushmeat hunting and poaching of protected species as supplementary livelihood activities, compounding the direct habitat impacts. The influx of migrant workers to mining areas increases demand for forest resources, including wildlife for consumption, and stimulates illegal logging near mining sites (Edwards et al., 2014). Protected species, including great apes, forest elephants, and various primate species, face heightened vulnerability as mining expands into previously inaccessible forested areas. Addressing these biodiversity impacts requires the integration of environmental monitoring into all stages of mining planning, including buffer zones around ecologically sensitive areas, mandatory biodiversity assessments within EIAs, wildlife protection protocols at mining sites, and alternative livelihood programs to reduce dependence on bushmeat and forest resources (Tieguhong et al., 2015). The Mining Code's provisions for site restoration represent a necessary but insufficient step; effective biodiversity conservation demands proactive planning, cross-sectoral coordination, and the meaningful engagement of local and Indigenous communities in resource management decisions.

Despite these regulatory advances, enforcement remains the critical challenge. The vast geographic dispersion of ASM sites, combined with limited institutional capacity and the predominantly informal character of the sector, creates significant obstacles to effective environmental monitoring. Achieving meaningful protection will require sustained investment in monitoring capacity, enforcement infrastructure, and the development of economically viable alternatives to mercury-based processing technologies (Hilson, 2002).

Economic Potential and Development

Cameroon's diamond economic potential, while modest by global standards, represents a meaningful component of the country's broader mineral endowment and economic diversification strategy. However, the estimated potential of 3 to 5 million carats documented by MINMIDT (2023a) must be interpreted cautiously considering Spaggiari's (2023) findings that at least the Mobilong deposit—previously considered among the most promising fields—is

characterized by grades far below commercial viability. The mining sector contributes only approximately 1% to GDP, reflecting both the underdevelopment of the sector and the dominance of ASM operations that generate limited taxable revenue (IMF, 2026).

The December 2023 Mining Code represents the most significant legislative reform of Cameroon's mining sector in decades. The Code establishes mandatory state participation through the Société Nationale des Mines (SONAMINES), which is mandated to acquire shares in mining companies and holds exclusive rights to purchase and market gold and diamonds (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2024). The state is entitled to up to 10% of shares free of charge, with protections against dilution. The Code implements fiscal instruments including a 25% synthetic tax on actual gold production and a 5% export tax on mineral commodities. Three mining funds have been established: the Mining Sector Development Fund, the Mining Site and Quarry Restoration Fund, and the Special Local Capacity Building Account (Law No. 2023/014, 2023).

The IMF's (2026) Article IV Consultation projects a gradual recovery in economic growth, with real GDP growth reaching 3.3% in 2026 and exceeding 4% from 2028 as energy bottlenecks ease and mining production expands. Over the medium term, growth could reach 4.6% by 2031, supported by diversification into mining. While these projections are driven primarily by bauxite and iron ore projects, the broader mining sector development creates institutional and infrastructural foundations that benefit diamond governance. Cameroon's National Development Strategy 2020–2030 (NDS30) positions the country as an emerging mining destination in Central Africa, emphasizing improved governance frameworks, enhanced transparency, and greater value addition (Republic of Cameroon, 2020).

Realizing whatever economic potential Cameroon's diamond resources hold will require a fundamentally different approach from the speculative model that characterized the Mobilong venture. Rather than pursuing large-scale industrial extraction of deposits of uncertain viability, a more sustainable strategy would focus on formalizing and supporting the existing ASM sector, investing in accurate geological assessment, establishing transparent marketing channels through SONAMINES, and ensuring that diamond revenues are captured within the formal economy and directed toward community development and environmental restoration (Pedro, 2006). The development of local cutting and polishing capacity could further enhance value addition, moving Cameroon beyond the role of raw material exporter.

Governance Challenges and Kimberley Process Compliance

Cameroon's diamond mining sector faces structural governance challenges deeply embedded in the institutional, geographic, and economic characteristics of the industry. Weak regulatory oversight, geographically dispersed operations across remote areas, multiple actors ranging from individual artisanal

miners to international investors, and limited enforcement capacity collectively create an environment conducive to irregularities, fraud, and illicit mineral flows (Bamenjo & Silinou, 2025). A 2022 mapping study by RELUFA starkly quantified the scale of informality: 85% of mining sites visited lacked proper artisanal exploitation authorization, while 50% of operators did not record their production. These figures reveal a sector in which most of the diamond production occurs outside formal regulatory frameworks, fundamentally undermining governance and traceability efforts.

The December 2023 Mining Code attempts to address these gaps through several institutional mechanisms. The establishment of SONAMINES as the exclusive purchaser and marketer of gold and diamonds aims to centralize and formalize mineral marketing channels, reducing opportunities for smuggling. Enhanced traceability requirements seek to improve documentation of mineral flows from mine site to export point, and compliance enforcement provisions include a permit revocation deadline for non-compliant operators (Law No. 2023/014, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these measures depends critically on institutional capacity—the ability of SONAMINES, MINMIDT, and associated agencies to actually monitor, enforce, and administer the new regulatory framework across hundreds of dispersed mining sites in challenging terrain (Hilson & Maconachie, 2020).

Corruption represents a persistent challenge to effective governance. The Mobilong scandal demonstrated how governance weaknesses can be exploited by actors seeking to extract rents from inflated resource claims, while CAPAM's direct financial stake in C&K Mining raised questions about conflicts of interest in mining oversight (Freudenthal, 2016). Transparency International's (2024) assessments have consistently identified Cameroon as facing significant corruption challenges across extractive industries. Addressing corruption requires not only strengthened legal frameworks but also institutional reforms that enhance transparency in mining contract negotiations, ensure the independence of regulatory bodies, and create effective accountability mechanisms.

Kimberley Process Implementation

Cameroon's participation in the KPCS represents a critical component of the country's diamond governance framework. The timeline of engagement reflects a gradual process of institutional development. In 2003, the Head of State signed the instrument for Cameroon's adherence to the Kimberley Process. In July 2007, MINMIDT initiated a study with France's Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM) to assess diamond production and trade patterns. On November 2, 2011, Decree No. 2011/3666/PM established the certification system, and following a 2012 expert visit to diamond-producing regions, Cameroon was formally accepted as a participating country in August 2012 (MINMIDT, 2023a). In January 2013, C&K Mining received the first Kimberley Certificate issued by Cameroon, authorizing the export of approximately 600 carats of rough diamonds—marking

Cameroon's formal entry into the international regulated diamond trade.

Cameroon has established a national traceability system with focal points in the principal diamond-producing regions and at international airports. The National Permanent Secretariat of the Kimberley Process supervises the diamond supply chain, validates production and export data, and issues certificates (Bamenjo & Silinou, 2025). However, the system faces formidable challenges rooted in the structural characteristics of the sector. The RELUFA (2022) study's finding that half of operators do not record production makes it impossible to verify the origin and volume of diamonds entering the supply chain, while the predominance of unauthorized mining sites means the vast majority of production occurs outside the formal certification framework. A critical structural problem is the absence of sufficient buying offices on the Cameroonian side of the border: diamonds frequently exit through the CAR due to the lack of purchasing infrastructure, depriving Cameroon of both revenue and traceability (RELUFA, 2022). Informal actors purchase production at 95% of mining sites, further undermining the integrity of the certification chain. Addressing these challenges requires expanding the network of buying offices, intensifying formalization efforts, and investing in digital monitoring technologies (Bamenjo & Silinou, 2025; Grant, 2012; Kimberley Process, 2023).

Social Consequences

The social impacts of diamond mining on local communities represent some of the most urgent dimensions of the sector's governance challenges. Mining activities have resulted in the displacement of communities from ancestral lands, the loss of agricultural land sustaining rural livelihoods, chronic health risks from exposure to contaminated water and hazardous conditions, systematic exclusion from the benefits of mineral exploitation, and persistent concerns about child labor (RELUFA, 2022, 2025). These impacts fall disproportionately on already vulnerable populations, including rural farming communities, Indigenous groups, women, and children in the East Region.

Testimonies gathered by RELUFA from miners and community members in Kambélé paint a stark picture. Residents recount stories of young men buried alive in collapsing mine shafts, families displaced from fertile lands by expanding operations, and water sources polluted with mercury and silt. One artisanal miner testified that "they are the ones dying in the holes, yet they don't see the benefits from mineral exploitation" (RELUFA, 2025)—a statement that encapsulates the profound inequity characterizing the sector. The tension between foreign investors and local communities constitutes a particularly fraught dimension: the influx of semi-mechanized operators, many from Asian countries, displaced local artisanal miners from productive areas while environmental and social costs of intensified extraction were borne by host communities (RELUFA, 2025). The presence of children at mining sites, documented by RELUFA (2022), raises serious concerns about violations of international labor standards.

These social consequences are compounded by the absence of effective mechanisms for free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)—the principle that communities should have the right to give or withhold consent to projects that may affect their lands, resources, and livelihoods (Owen & Kemp, 2014). The December 2023 Mining Code's establishment of the Special Local Capacity Building Account represents a step toward channeling extractive benefits to affected communities (Law No. 2023/014, 2023). However, effective implementation requires transparent governance of fund disbursement, meaningful community participation in decision-making, and institutionalized grievance mechanisms. The experience of Kambélé demonstrates that community mobilization and civil society advocacy can catalyze policy changes, but sustained reform requires permanent mechanisms for community voice and benefit-sharing rather than ad hoc interventions driven by crisis (Smillie, 2014).

Reform Recommendations

Addressing the interconnected challenges facing Cameroon's diamond mining sector requires a comprehensive reform agenda that simultaneously strengthens governance, protects the environment, empowers communities, and ensures international compliance. The following recommendations, drawn from the preceding analysis, are designed to be mutually reinforcing.

First, the Kimberley Process traceability system must be strengthened through the deployment of digital monitoring technologies, including blockchain-based tracking, mobile data collection platforms, and GPS-enabled site registration. The network of buying offices in diamond-producing regions should be expanded to reduce cross-border smuggling to the CAR, ensuring artisanal miners have access to formal, competitive marketing channels. Compliance enforcement must be systematized through regular site inspections, production audits, and consistent application of sanctions (Bamenjo & Silinou, 2025).

Second, environmental protection and biodiversity conservation require stricter EIAs as prerequisites for all mining permits, with mandatory post-mining restoration plans and financial assurance mechanisms. The Mining Site and Quarry Restoration Fund must be adequately capitalized and transparently administered, with independent monitoring of restoration outcomes (Law No. 2023/014, 2023). Programs to eliminate mercury use should be accelerated, building on the IGF's (2025) capacity-building initiatives, and biodiversity conservation plans, including buffer zones around protected forests—should be integrated into all mining permits.

Third, community empowerment demands mandatory benefit-sharing agreements as conditions for mining permits, ensuring defined percentages of revenues are directed to community development priorities identified through participatory processes. FPIC protocols must be implemented and enforced, providing communities meaningful voice in decisions about mining on their lands (Owen & Kemp, 2014). Alterna-

tive livelihood programs should be developed for affected communities, including support for agriculture, small enterprise development, and skills training.

Fourth, institutional capacity at SONAMINES and MINMIDT must be built systematically, including training and deployment of mining inspectors, geologists, and environmental specialists to regional offices. The ASM sector should be formalized through accessible licensing, training, and equipment provision. Anti-corruption mechanisms must be strengthened through transparency in contract negotiations, asset declarations for officials involved in mining governance, and independent oversight bodies (Transparency International, 2024). Mining contracts and revenues should be published in accordance with Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards, and Cameroon should pursue full EITI compliance (World Bank, 2020; MINMIDT, 2023b).

Conclusion

The diamond mining sector in Cameroon stands at a critical juncture. This paper has demonstrated that the sector's trajectory—from speculative ventures and governance failures to environmental degradation and community exploitation—reflects not merely a series of administrative shortcomings but deeper structural issues of institutional capacity, political economy, and power asymmetries. The Mobilong case illustrates with clarity how the absence of independent resource verification can cascade into financial fraud, diplomatic incidents, and institutional damage—a lesson reinforced by Spaggiari's (2023) definitive finding that the deposit's average grade of 0.09 ct/m³ renders it economically unviable. The pervasive informality documented by RELUFA (2022)—with the vast majority of mining sites operating without authorization and half of operators failing to record production—reveals a sector in which governance mechanisms remain largely aspirational rather than operational.

The December 2023 Mining Code and the establishment of SONAMINES represent significant institutional responses to these challenges, demonstrating legislative intent to formalize marketing channels, enhance traceability, strengthen environmental provisions, and channel revenues toward community development. Yet the critical challenge lies in implementation—in translating legislative provisions into effective governance outcomes on the ground, in remote mining communities, and across dispersed ASM operations. The gap between legislative ambition and enforcement capacity remains the sector's defining vulnerability.

Looking forward, the analysis presented here suggests that Cameroon's pathway to sustainable diamond governance must be holistic rather than piecemeal. Environmental protection cannot be separated from formalization of the ASM sector, because informal miners lacking secure tenure have no incentive to invest in environmental stewardship. Community empowerment cannot be separated from Kimberley Process compliance, because effective traceability requires the cooperation of mining communities who will only participate if

they perceive tangible benefits. Institutional capacity cannot be separated from anti-corruption reform, because regulatory bodies captured by rent-seeking interests will not enforce the rules they are designed to uphold. These interdependencies demand an integrated governance framework—one that aligns the incentives of miners, communities, government agencies, and international partners toward shared objectives of transparency, sustainability, and equity. Cameroon's diamond sector will ultimately be judged not by the quality of its legislation but by the tangible improvements it delivers in environmental protection, community well-being, and transparent governance. The pathway is arduous but navigable, provided reforms are pursued with political commitment, adequate resources, and genuine partnership with the communities whose lands and livelihoods are most directly affected.

References

Anyu, J. Ndumbe, & Moki, Samuel B. *The Cameroon-South Korea (Mobilong), Diamond Project and its Implication for Sustainable Development in Cameroon.* Mediterranean Quarterly, Volume 24, Number 1, Winter 2013, pp. 98-118

Bamenjo, J. N., & Silinou, L. (2025). *Le système de certification du processus de Kimberley au Cameroun*. Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition. https://www.kpcivilsociety.org/publications/cameroon-kpcs-2025

Bridge, G. (2004). Contested terrain: Mining and the environment. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, *29*(1), 205–259. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.energy.28.011503.163434

Business in Cameroon. (2014, November 26). Cameroon: C&K Mining sells assets in Mobilong diamond mining to Chinese-American investor. *Business in Cameroon*. https://www.businessincameroon.com/mining/1126-5141

Business in Cameroon. (2026a, February 18). Cameroon: IMF sees gradual growth recovery driven by mining and energy reform. *Business in Cameroon*. https://www.businessincameroon.com/mining/1802-13981

Edwards, D. P., Sloan, S., Weng, L., Dirks, P., Sayer, J., & Laurance, W. F. (2014). Mining and the African environment. *Conservation Letters*, *7*(3), 302–311. https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12076

Freudenthal, E. (2016, March 14). Virtual mining in Cameroon: How to make a fortune by failing. *African Arguments*. Royal African Society. https://africanarguments.org/2016/03/virtual-mining-in-cameroon/

Grant, J. A. (2012). The Kimberley Process at ten: Reflections on a decade of efforts to end the trade in conflict diamonds. In P. Lujala & S. A. Rustad (Eds.), *High-value*

natural resources and post-conflict peacebuilding (pp. 159–179). Routledge.

Hilson, G. (2002). An overview of land use conflicts in mining communities. *Land Use Policy*, *19*(1), 65–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-8377(01)00043-6

Hilson, G., & Maconachie, R. (2020). Artisanal and small-scale mining and the Sustainable Development Goals: Opportunities and new directions for sub-Saharan Africa. *Geoforum*, *111*, 125–141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.09.006

Intergovernmental Forum on Mining. (2025). *Spurring action to manage abandoned sites and toxic chemicals in Cameroon's artisanal and small-scale mining sector*. International Institute for Sustainable Development. https://www.igfmining.org/cameroon-asm-2025

International Monetary Fund. (2026, February 13). *IMF staff completes 2026 Article IV Mission to Cameroon* (Press Release No. 26/049). https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2026/02/13/pr2649

Kimberley Process. (2023). *Kimberley Process Certification Scheme: Core document*. Kimberley Process Secretariat. https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/kpcs-core-document

Laurance, W. F., Useche, D. C., Rendeiro, J., Kalka, M., Bradshaw, C. J., Sloan, S. P., & Zamzani, F. (2012). Averting biodiversity collapse in tropical forest protected areas. *Nature*, *489*(7415), 290–294. https://doi.org/10.1038/nature11318

Law No. 2023/014 of 19 December 2023 relating to the Mining Code, Republic of Cameroon (2023). https://www.prc.cm/en/news/the-acts/laws/6239

Le Billon, P. (2008). Diamond wars? Conflict diamonds and geographies of resource wars. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *98*(2), 345–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/00045600801922422

Mbodiam, B. R. (2016, May 16). Cameroon: The revaluation of the potential of the Mobilong diamond deposit has started. *Business in Cameroon*. https://www.business-incameroon.com/mining/1605-5877

Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development. (2023a). *Kimberley Process: Situation in Cameroon*. Government of Cameroon. https://www.minmidt.cm/kimberley-process

Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development. (2023b). *Mining investment guide for Cameroon*. Government of Cameroon. https://www.minmidt.cm/mining-investment

Owen, J. R., & Kemp, D. (2014). Mining and community relations: Mapping the internal dimensions of practice. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, *1*(1), 12–19.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2013.12.004

Pedro, A. M. (2006). Mainstreaming mineral wealth in growth and poverty reduction strategies. *Minerals & Energy—Raw Materials Report*, *21*(1), 2–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14041040600575498

Republic of Cameroon. (2020). *National Development Strategy 2020–2030 (NDS30)*. Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development. https://www.minepat.gov.cm/nds30

Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim. (2022). *State of play and mapping of diamond mining sites in Eastern Cameroon*. Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition. https://www.kpcivilsociety.org/publications/cameroon-2022

Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim. (2025, August 22). Local communities and the future of artisanal mining in Cameroon. *RELUFA Blog*. https://relufa.org/artisanal-mining-cameroon-2025

Smillie, I. (2014). *Diamonds*. Polity Press.

Spaggiari, R. I. (2023). The Mobilong alluvial diamond field of southeast Cameroon: Revised economic potential and sedimentological attributes. *Journal of African Earth Sciences*, *197*, Article 104766. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jafrearsci.2022.104766

Tieguhong, J. C., Ingram, V., Mala, W. A., Ndoye, O., & Grouwels, S. (2015). How governance impacts non-timber forest product value chains in Cameroon. *Forest Policy and Economics*, *61*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2015.08.003

Transparency International. (2024). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2024*. Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2024). Cameroon—Adopts Mining Code 2023 mandating state participation in various mining activities. *Investment Policy Monitor*. https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/investment-policy-monitor/measures/4259

Wikipedia. (2024, December 15). MOFAT Diamond scandal. In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MOFAT_Diamond_scandal

World Bank. (2020). *Minerals for climate action: The mineral intensity of the clean energy transition*. World Bank Group. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/extractiveindustries/brief/climate-smart-mining