

Effects of artisanal diamond mining on the living conditions of local communities in the Central African Republic

Executive Summary



CCRAG

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Grassroots research on local diamond mining impacts



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This study aims to shed light on the effects of artisanal diamond mining on the living conditions of local populations in the towns of Boda, Nola and Berberati in south-western Central African Republic (CAR). The research is part of a series of reflections on the situation of the mining sector, which occupies a strategic place in the CAR's economic potential, and which locally employs thousands of people. These reflections also focus on the need to clarify the national and, above all, local impacts of mining activities.

The objective is to provide answers to **four key questions** regarding: the nature of artisanal diamond mining in the targeted towns (1), the impact of artisanal diamond mining on mining communities (2), the economic potential of the artisanal mining sector (3), and the role of the government, civil society organisations and miners in improving the living conditions of local communities (4.)

In **Boda**, 13 mining sites located between 0 and 20 kilometres from the town were visited. 1381 people, including 15 women and 133 children under the age of 15, are actively working there. There is a gendered distribution of tasks. Men carry out the most difficult and certainly the best paid tasks: digging underground to extract the minerals. Women and children execute subsidiary tasks, such as carrying and washing the ore at riversides. Women also carry out modest commercial activities around the mining sites. They mainly sell food items and run restaurants. The most prominent diamond mining methods in Boda are dams, pits and dredging.

In **Berberati**, surveyors visited 13 artisanal diamond mining sites located between 0 and 50 kilometres from the town. 528 people, including 37 women and 15 children under the age of 15, were actively involved in production. Women and children represent almost 10% of the total number of workers. The same division of labour is observed in Boda and Berberati. Several diamond buying offices are operational in the town of Berberati. The company BADICA (Bureau d'Achat de Diamant en Centrafrique) is still based there and remains very active. There are also parallel and informal networks run by "débrouillards" who finance diamond mining activities. Some traders and officials also illegally subsidise mining activities in the town of Berberati. Mined diamonds are sold clandestinely and tracing their movements is very difficult.

In **Nola**, 16 sites were visited. 252 people were present in these mining sites, including 23 women and 15 children under 15 years of age who are actively involved in the production and extraction of diamonds. Children under the age of 15 represent 6% of the total number of workers. Like in mining sites in Boda and Berberati, women and children are involved in the transport and processing of minerals. Four types of mining techniques were observed: pit, streambed, bank (dam and/or dredge) and open terrace. Streambed mining remains the most common technique in Nola because, similarly to Berberati, a river and multiple streams are crossing the mining area. The mining landscape in Nola comprises three semi-mechanised mining sites - two of which are owned by Chinese citizens - and five diamond and gold buying offices.

In visited mining sites, the **key impacts of diamond mining appear to be environmental and social**. The **environmental impacts** relate to the effects of mining on water quality and on the fauna and flora landscape. The impacts on water are related to the discharge of waste rocks and washed material into the watercourses around mining sites. Impacts on fauna are closely associated with bank and streambed mining, which are the most polluting types of extraction, significantly contributing to the degradation of aquatic life. Mining activity is also associated with the destruction of vegetation leading to the movement or disappearance of mobile fauna species such as birds, game, etc.

The **social impacts** refer to the effects on the schooling levels of children in the study areas and on the levels and performance of rural activities in these areas.

On the first aspect, despite considerable efforts to prohibit the presence of children in the mines, the presence of many children under the age of 15 was nevertheless observed on the mining sites visited in Boda. According to site managers, this presence is explained by the resurgence of armed conflict in December 2020, which prevented local children from returning to school. As for the impact on rural activities, mining activity is leading to profound changes in local livelihoods. People are gradually abandoning their rural activities. Of course, the attraction of mining activities could not be the only variable explaining the decline in rural work. The latter is also associated with the insecurity linked to the presence of armed groups in these areas.

Artisanal mining is a sector which provides livelihoods for the actors involved as well as for the local communities. Diggers, artisanal miners and diamond collectors derive their main income from mining activities. However, artisanal mining, particularly of diamonds, must be responsibly monitored because it has the potential to drive integral development.

The following **recommendations** are therefore made:

To the government

CCRAG recommends that the government would deploy the Special Anti-Fraud Unit (USAF) in towns and mining sites. This deployment will make it possible to combat the phenomenon of illegal diamond exports decryed by diamond collectors and local authorities interviewed during the data collection.

The government must also ensure that its land borders are secured, particularly with Cameroon. According to testimony received, diamonds from the country are illegally exported via Cameroon by land. The USAF should be involved in the process of controlling minerals from the CAR. An information-sharing mechanism between CAR and border authorities should be established and strongly encouraged.

CCRAG invites the government to develop a rigorous mechanism of sanctions to force mining operators to be respectful of the environment, especially of crops and waterways. To this end, updating the mining law is an imperative.

To artisanal miners

CCRAG recommends that artisanal miners respect the rights of children. Those in charge of mining sites must ensure that children under the age of 18 are not allowed on the mining sites.

Artisanal miners, including site managers, should ensure that environmental standards are respected. They should avoid dumping waste rocks in rivers and streams.



The Centre Centrafricain de Recherche et d'Analyse Géopolitique (CCRAG) is an association under Central African law, registered under N0 480/MATDDL/DIRCAB/DGAT/DAPCA/SASE of 20 September 2018, with its headquarters in Bangui, which aims to carry out studies, expertise and training in the fields of research, public change management, governance and extractive industries.

Member of the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition, CCRAG is an organisation that takes part in the fight against blood diamonds in the Central African Republic. It also carries out advocacy actions for the revitalisation of the artisanal mining sector and the improvement of the living conditions of workers on artisanal mining sites.

Context: This report is part of a larger pan-African research project called *Grassroots research on local diamond mining impact* which was run in eight African countries by ten African member organisations from the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition.

The eight country reports intend to study some of the impacts of artisanal and small-scale diamond mining in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory-Coast, the Republic of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe and the impact of industrial diamond mining in Lesotho.

The full version of the reports can be read and downloaded on <https://www.kpcivilsociety.org/publications/publications-from-the-coalition/grassroots-research-on-local-diamond-mining-impact/>



This study was conducted with the guidance and technical support of the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition (KP CSC). The KP CSC is the umbrella organization that acts as an observer to the Kimberley Process (KP) on behalf of civil society. Most of the coalition's members are based in Africa, the world's largest diamond producing continent. Representing communities affected by diamond mining and trade, members work to improve the governance of the diamond sector in their home countries. The coalition's local and regional expertise allows us to monitor responsible diamond sourcing on the ground and to articulate a citizen's perspective on the diamond sector in national, regional and international forums. The Coalition includes representatives from Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Guinea, Ivory-Coast, Liberia, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Belgium.



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