

State of play and mapping of diamond mining sites in Eastern Cameroon

Executive Summary



Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim

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Grassroots research on local diamond mining impact

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cameroon has significant iron, gold, bauxite and diamond mineralisation. Diamond mining is mainly artisanal and semi-mechanised. Although a minor diamond producer, Cameroon is a participant of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). To meet the requirements of this initiative, Cameroon has put in place a traceability system which is materialised by the legal and institutional arsenal it has acquired to specify the modalities for the exercise of exploration, exploitation and even the sale of mining products. Given that the KPCS requires exact knowledge of the origin of an exported diamond, mapping mining sites proves to be very important for good diamond traceability. Therefore, the Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim (RELUFA) carried out a diagnostic and mapping exercise in the East Cameroon region. The study aimed to answer following questions: Where are the diamond mining sites located? Who are the actors who frequent these mining sites and their characteristics? What are the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of the production and marketing of diamond mining sites?

It appears that the remoteness of mining sites in the East Cameroon region does not facilitate their identification and regular monitoring, particularly for the actors in charge of monitoring the KPCS, whose frequency of visits to the sites is low. In addition, a progressive disengagement of workers from the diamond mining sector can be observed. This could be linked to the low or even non-existent production of certain sites during the 12 months prior to data collection. At the same time, this low production is difficult to trace, particularly due to the non-registration of production by artisanal miners and the participation of unidentified actors in the production and marketing of these diamonds. Indeed, 50% of operators do not record their production, 85% of the mining sites visited do not have an Artisanal Exploitation Authorisation (AEA) and the production in 95% of the sites is bought by informal actors.

Given the large number of unauthorised sites and informal buyers, not only is the effectiveness of the ad valorem tax collection - and therefore its redistribution - questionable, but so is the legal recognition of the origin of the diamonds mined at these sites. The identification of these unauthorised sites through this mapping should therefore enable the mining administration to approach their promoters to facilitate their registration and monitoring in order to improve traceability from the point of origin of the diamonds.

The study also underlines that most of the diamond mining sites are located on the border with the Central African Republic (CAR). The exit of diamonds through the Central African Republic remains plausible because of the lack of proximity of buying offices in most mining areas of Eastern Cameroon. The absence of buying offices on the Cameroonian side of the CAR border is therefore a reason for artisans to go and sell their production to the nearest office in the CAR.

Data on the price of diamonds and the relationship between the value and weight of diamonds is unreliable. A specific study on this issue should be carried out as the payment of the ad valorem tax, the improvement of artisans' incomes and their independence from financiers also depend on this.

In addition, important social and environmental findings include the presence of children involved in mining activities and the small-scale felling of trees for site extensions and firewood.

In view of these different realities, the following **recommendations** can be made:

To the government

- SONAMINES, as part of its policy on the purchase and marketing of diamonds, should exclusively set up buying offices at the borders near the mining sites in order to channel a good quantity of rough diamonds mined on Cameroonian territory. This policy would, for example, limit the use of buying offices in CAR by artisanal miners who have extracted stones in Cameroon;
- Strengthen the partnership between law enforcement agencies, customs officers, the SNPPK and SONAMINES in order to improve capacity and cooperation in monitoring supply chains and their control and surveillance missions in the mining sector;
- Sensitise artisans on the importance of filling in production records and, to comply with the regulation and to sell to compliant actors in order for them, and the Cameroonian population as a whole, to benefit from the redistribution of the ad valorem tax on diamonds;
- Support artisanal miners by offering them credit and mining inputs to reduce their dependency towards financiers – who are very often non-compliant – and allow them to be financially self-sufficient;
- Organise mobile registration caravans to facilitate the procurement of individual artisanal miners' cards and artisanal exploitation authorisations;
- Poverty being the main factor for children to go to work, the development of parental incomes and the establishment of good schools in the affected localities should limit child labour in the mining sites. Redistribution of royalties and support for parents' income-generating activities could therefore help to achieve these objectives. Increased monitoring of mining sites should be carried out to significantly reduce the number of children on mining sites;
- Ensure that existing laws on environmental impact management are enforced.

To the civil society

- Conduct studies on:
 - Diamond pricing, payment and redistribution of the ad valorem tax with a view to improving the knowledge of artisans in this respect;
 - The types of land rights associated with unlicensed or unauthorised mining sites and the perceived security of operators in these areas.



The Réseau de Lutte Contre la Faim (RELUFA) is a network that defines itself as a platform of civil society actors and grassroots communities whose objective is to combat the systemic problems that generate poverty, hunger and economic, social and environmental injustices in Cameroon.

RELUFA acquired its legal status in 2001; it is non-partisan and non-profit. RELUFA is a member of the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition and is therefore an observer of the implementation of the Kimberley Process in Cameroon.

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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