

Priority actual studies for the Ghana gold-sector just-transition review

Reassessment date: 30 September 2026

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Why this replaces the original “read everything” approach

The earlier corpus was intentionally broad. It included sources needed to test side questions about public purchasing, trade discrepancies, migration, traceability and political institutions. That breadth is useful for an evidence archive, but it is not the most efficient reading route for the central question:

What combination of livelihood support, mining regulation, public purchasing, supply-chain accountability and regional cooperation could deliver a just transition in Ghana's gold sector without displacing harm elsewhere?

The reassessment gives priority to sources that do at least one of the following:

1. directly examine Ghanaian livelihoods, restrictions, alternatives or formalisation;
2. evaluate or closely observe an intervention rather than merely recommend one;
3. measure or explain livelihood and environmental consequences together;
4. reveal unequal effects across workers, owners, farmers, women or affected communities;
5. use a comparatively credible method for the claim being made; or
6. contribute a mechanism not already covered by a stronger or more direct source.

Country variety, publication prestige and the mere availability of a PDF were not treated as evidence of relevance.

1. Read these first

These ten sources provide the clearest foundation for the livelihood-centred question. Their limitations are included so that reading priority is not mistaken for unqualified endorsement. The sequence now gives greater weight to research led from Ghanaian universities and public institutions, while still ranking sources by relevance and method rather than affiliation alone.

1. Adranyi, Stringer & Altink (2023): livelihoods, land and unequal gains in Ghana

Complete study: [The impacts of artisanal and small-scale gold mining on rural livelihood trajectories: Insights from Ghana](#)

Why it is essential: It most directly examines how Ghanaian households combine mining and farming, why mining's accessible cash matters, and why land, finance and networks produce different livelihood trajectories.

Method: 360 household surveys, 30 oral histories, farmer focus groups, key-informant interviews and transect walks in three Atiwa West communities.

Read critically: Retrospective histories and purposively selected high-mining communities cannot establish national prevalence or causal long-term welfare effects.

2. Baddianaah, Tuu & Baatuuwie (2021): mining cash within farming households in Wa East

Complete study: [Livelihood implications of artisanal gold mining in farming communities: insight from the Wa East District, Ghana](#)

Why it is essential: This University for Development Studies study directly tests whether mining and farming coexist, why mining income is attractive, and how mining proceeds can finance seed, fertiliser and labour while mining also competes for labour and land.

Method: Household survey of 290 household heads in five purposively selected high-mining communities, plus interviews with 15 lead miners and five assembly members.

Read critically: The income measures use different denominators and do not adjust for work time, capital, risk, debt, seasonality or selection. The mining-income correlation with total income is partly mechanical. Use the study for cash-flow and livelihood-combination mechanisms, not a causal comparison of returns.

3. Osei, Yeboah, Kumi & Antoh (2021): what a mining ban did to selected young workers

Complete study: [Government's ban on Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining, youth livelihoods and imagined futures in Ghana](#)

Why it is essential: This University of Ghana/KNUST study directly addresses the transition cost of restriction: lost frequent income, debt, family strain, migration and other coping among people whose mining work was disrupted.

Method: Two phases of qualitative interviews with 58 young people—38 men and 20 women—in four Ghanaian communities.

Read critically: Participants were selected because the ban affected them. There is no comparison group, environmental counterfactual or population estimate, so the paper cannot establish the ban's overall balance.

4. Obiri et al. (2016): environmental exposure and community livelihoods measured together

Complete study: [Assessing the Environmental and Socio-Economic Impacts of Artisanal Gold Mining on the Livelihoods of Communities in the Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipality in Ghana](#)

Why it is essential: It brings affected-community survey evidence together with repeated water sampling instead of assuming that residents' perceptions or mine status measure environmental harm. The author team includes the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission, University of Cape Coast, Central University and EPA.

Method: Two hundred water samples collected at ten sites every two weeks from January to October 2013, with laboratory quality assurance, plus a survey of 250 residents and logistic-regression analysis.

Read critically: The integration is unusually useful, but the inference is weaker than the laboratory protocol. There is no non-mining control watershed, mine-by-mine source identification or before/after intervention, and the area contains both artisanal and larger surface mining. Household selection is under-reported, some survey percentages conflict, and the regression table contains apparent reporting errors. Use it for measured contamination and community perceptions in the sampled area—not source-specific causation or the effect of a policy.

5. Hilson & Banchirigah (2009): why Ghanaian alternative-livelihood projects lacked credibility

Complete study: [Are alternative livelihood projects alleviating poverty in mining communities? Experiences from Ghana](#)

Why it is essential: It asks the right real-options question. Crop, poultry and livestock programmes often produced income too late, lacked markets, reached few people or were not designed around miners' needs.

Method: Interviews with mining-company officials, galamsey leaders, government officers and NGO staff, compared with project descriptions across several Ghanaian mining areas.

Read critically: This is mechanism evidence, not a programme impact evaluation. Recruitment, coding, household outcomes and counterfactuals are not reported well enough to estimate effectiveness.

6. Kumah (2022): why legal status may be inaccessible or locally illegitimate

Complete study: [“The License is Just a Piece of Paper”: Local Perceptions on Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Formalization in Ghana](#)

Why it is essential: It separates statutory licensing from customary permission and shows how ancillary costs, expertise and centralised procedures can exclude smaller operators.

Method: 43 interviews with miners, landowners and local leaders plus 15 state and non-state stakeholders in three Ghanaian mining areas.

Read critically: Snowball recruitment and limited reporting prevent prevalence claims; environmental conduct was not independently tested.

7. Buss et al. (2019): gendered work and likely exclusion from formalisation

Complete study: [Gender and Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: Implications for Formalization](#)

Why it is essential: It shows how delivery through licences, cooperatives, land, capital and teams can reproduce male control. It also shows why abruptly removing low-paid mining work can still harm women when their non-mining earnings are lower.

Method: Survey of 878 people, more than 400 participants in 60 focus groups, participant observation and 28 life histories across mine areas in DRC, Rwanda and Uganda.

Read critically: The sites were purposively selected and cover gold and 3T minerals. It diagnoses exclusion mechanisms but does not evaluate a formalisation reform.

8. GEF Independent Evaluation Office (2022): whether mercury and formalisation projects lasted

Complete evaluation: [GEF Interventions in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector](#)

Why it is essential: It follows completed interventions and finds both sustained changes and equipment abandonment, maintenance failures, toxin substitution, weak gender outcomes and neglected downstream communities.

Method: Portfolio and document review, technical literature, geospatial analysis and 149 interviews across paired case regions in Burkina Faso-Senegal, Ecuador-Peru and the Philippines.

Read critically: This is a strong independent implementation and sustainability review, not a common causal effect evaluation. It still relies partly on project monitoring and recall.

9. Mansfield (2020): alternatives must replace the functions of a harmful livelihood

Complete study: [Trying to Be All Things to All People: Alternative Development in Afghanistan](#)

Why it is essential: It provides the clearest cross-sector account of why substituting a crop or job fails when the harmful activity also supplies credit, land, labour demand, cash timing and protection against risk. It also documents displacement of land-poor workers.

Method: Retrospective synthesis of more than two decades of field and evaluation experience, drawing on a wider record of more than 20,000 household interviews.

Read critically: The chapter does not use a systematic-review protocol or reanalyse a defined pooled dataset. It supplies mechanisms, not an average effect or direct gold-sector transfer.

10. Álvarez-Berríos, L'Roe & Naughton-Treves (2021): formalisation can concentrate rather than contain mining

Complete study: [Does Formalizing Artisanal Gold Mining Mitigate Environmental Impacts?](#)

Why it is essential: It shows why licences and authorised corridors cannot be treated as environmental success. Mining became more spatially concentrated, yet substantial clearing continued outside the corridor and in sensitive areas.

Method: Annual Landsat classification across 20,850 km², fixed-effects and matching models, plus 47 interviews and two focus groups in Madre de Dios, Peru.

Read critically: Titling was not random, mining rose before some titles and concurrent gold-price, road, enforcement and political changes remain possible explanations.

2. Read these next

These sources add an important part of the policy package, but either overlap with the first set, examine a less transferable setting or have a narrower outcome.

11. Adranyi, Stringer & Altink (2024): farming-mining governance and environmental conflict

Complete study: [Joined-up governance for more complementary interactions between expanding artisanal small-scale gold mining and agriculture](#)

Adds reported farmland damage, unreclaimed sites and governance evidence to the livelihood picture. It uses the same field project and household sample as the 2023 paper and should not be counted as independent corroboration.

12. Adu-Baffour, Daum & Birner (2021): where the Ghanaian governance process creates bottlenecks

Complete study: [Governance challenges of small-scale gold mining in Ghana: Insights from a process net-map study](#)

Maps licensing stages, institutional influence, costs, delay and enforcement constraints. Its 78-person sample is weighted towards officials and licensed actors and contains only two farmers or landowners, so it is a process map rather than an affected-community evaluation.

13. Martinez, Smith & Malone (2021): what can improve after formalisation—and what remains

Complete study: [Formalization Is Just the Beginning](#)

A 14-month case study of one comparatively capable Peruvian cooperative reports safer shifts, salaries, insurance, professional staff, retorts and tailings management alongside continuing finance and administrative burdens. It has no comparison operation or measured before-and-after pollution outcome.

14. Tsang et al. (2019): systematic review of occupational-health interventions

Complete study: [Occupational Health Programs for Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining: A Systematic Review](#)

The most useful evidence-base audit for technology and training. Only ten studies met the inclusion rules; designs were mainly uncontrolled and direct health outcomes were rare. It shows how little strong intervention evidence exists rather than proving a preferred technology.

15. IMPACT (2021): finance, proximity, cooperative capture and gender in a traceable supply chain

Complete implementation report: [Just Gold: Lessons for the Future of Artisanal Gold in DRC](#)

Exceptionally useful process evidence on prices, buyer proximity, credit, savings groups, cooperative control and mechanisation displacing women. It is an implementer report with multiple simultaneous components, donor subsidy and no counterfactual.

16. Jayachandran et al. (2017) and the World Bank follow-up (2018): conditional support and permanence

Complete trial: [Cash for Carbon: A Randomized Trial of Payments for Ecosystem Services to Reduce Deforestation](#)

Complete follow-up: [Evaluating the Permanence of Forest Conservation Following the End of Payments for Environmental Services in Uganda](#)

This is the strongest causal evidence in the corpus that conditional payments can reduce environmental harm. It also shows limited enrolment, possible loss of access for poorer neighbours and renewed clearing after payments stopped. It concerns forest owners, not Ghanaian miners, and tests a mechanism rather than a transferable programme.

17. Pereira & Pucci (2024 working paper; 2026 publication): buyer accountability

Complete working paper: [A Tale of Gold and Blood](#)

The strongest design on market-side accountability. A difference-in-differences analysis links Brazil's weakened first-buyer checks to more garimpo-related deforestation and higher municipal homicide rates in more exposed areas. Exposure is geological and spatial rather than observed transactions, and the study does not measure livelihood effects or displacement.

3. Targeted reading for particular questions

Read these only when the corresponding question becomes central.

Question	Source	Why it is second-line rather than core
How can mechanisation and political protection redistribute gains?	Crawford & Botchwey (2017), Ghana	Useful capture and gender mechanisms, but a small retrospective case with unverified corruption and smuggling claims.
Why is a licence not the same as permission to operate or compliance?	Arthur-Holmes, Tomude & Damtar (2026), Ghana	The legal distinction is important, but the empirical component is only 11 interviews and cannot establish outcomes.

Question	Source	Why it is second-line rather than core
How does customary tenure complicate formalisation?	Mensah (2021), Ghana	Valuable conceptual lens; no new fieldwork or systematic evidence selection.
How mobile are miners and mining livelihoods within West Africa?	Bolay (2021) and Boukaré (2020)	Establish pre-existing mobility and livelihood functions, not policy-induced relocation.
What regional trade incentives redirect gold?	OECD (2018), Gold at the Crossroads	Strong regional mechanism map, but a rapid assessment rather than an evaluated ECOWAS intervention.
How can mixed-origin gold acquire formal export status?	Brugger, Proksik & Fischer (2024), Bolivia	Detailed institutional evidence, but no transaction audit or representative livelihood sample.
Can restrictions redistribute violence or activity?	Stoop, Verpoorten & van der Windt (2018), DRC and Mejía, Restrepo & Roza (2017), Colombia	Comparatively strong designs, but one bundles conflict-mineral rules with a DRC ban and the other concerns coca spraying; neither is a direct Ghana analogue.
How do miners alter formalisation policy through political organisation?	Toledo Orozco (2022), Bolivia and Peru	Strong process account based on 120 interviews; it does not measure environmental or livelihood effects.

4. Sources removed from the main reading route

These sources remain in the evidence archive. They are not necessarily poor sources; they are less useful for answering the central livelihood-and-transition question.

Mainly transaction, trade or formal-channel evidence

- Public-purchasing material from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, the World Gold Council and other country descriptions: useful for price, tax, proximity and payment incentives, but it does not show that purchasing improves production practices, reduces mining or protects livelihoods.
- BGR's Kampene traceability pilot: useful for technical feasibility and leakage, but it measures registered lots rather than livelihood or environmental effects.
- SWISSAID's African trade reconciliation: useful for the scale and direction of trade discrepancies, but not for mine relocation, household outcomes or intervention effects.
- Brazil's national garimpo map and Ghana's national mining-footprint map: useful for spatial scale, not the livelihood consequences of a specific transition measure.

Too narrow or methodologically weak for the main conclusions

- The Fairmined comparison: its small well-being association becomes non-significant after full adjustment and it does not measure environmental change or excluded producers.
- The two-run Bolivian mercury-free demonstration: establishes feasibility only, without sustained adoption, exposure or environmental outcomes.
- Perception-only or heavily interested samples, including Arthur et al. (2016), Wireko-Gyebi et al. (2020 and 2025) and Hilson, Hilson & Bartels (2025): useful for hypotheses, but too weak to establish intervention effects.
- The Ofosu et al. review: a useful organising synthesis, but secondary to the primary Ghana studies already selected.
- Vorlaufer et al.'s post-payment motivation study: well designed but tests a behavioural proxy, not livelihood security or actual environmental permanence.

Primarily political background

- Baraybar Hidalgo & Dargent and related political-institutional comparisons help explain forbearance, bargaining and state fragmentation. They should be reopened for a specific political-

capture chapter, but they do not establish the livelihood or environmental performance of a policy package.

5. Recommended reading order

For the shortest defensible route, read sources **1-10** first. Then read **11-17** according to the policy mechanism under discussion. Use section 3 only when its specific question arises.

This order deliberately begins with Ghanaian livelihood dependence and the consequences of restriction. It then moves to exclusion, intervention durability and comparative mechanisms. Public purchasing and traceability no longer organise the reading list.