



## **Blood Diamonds and Conflict Financing**

*The Kimberley Process and Its Limitations: A Feminist Political Economy Approach*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines Blood Diamonds and Conflict Financing: The Kimberley Process and Its Limitations: A Feminist Political Economy Approach with a focused emphasis on Guinea within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a policy brief that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

**Keywords:** *Feminist Political Economy, Political Economy Approach, Blood Diamonds, Conflict Financing, Kimberley Process, Its Limitations*

#### **Article Highlights**

- KPCS overlooks how conflict economies are embedded in patriarchal power structures
- Women face systematic marginalization in Guinea's diamond sector
- Informal mining and corruption create significant governance gaps
- Effective policy requires transformative gender analysis beyond KPCS mandate

#### **Core Argument**

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has failed in Guinea due to its inability to address structural gendered inequalities that underpin the illicit diamond economy.

*This brief proposes gender justice as fundamental to disrupting conflict financing.*

### **Executive Summary**

This policy brief employs a feminist political economy (FPE) framework to critically analyse the persistent nexus of blood diamonds and conflict financing in Guinea, arguing that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) has failed to address the structural gendered inequalities that underpin this illicit economy ([Borras & Edelman, 2021](#)). The KPCS's technocratic, state-centric focus

on regulating rough diamond chains has proven inadequate in Guinea, where informal artisanal mining, pervasive corruption, and militarised control create significant governance gaps (D'Agoût & Dut, 2025). Consequently, the scheme's limitations are not merely operational but fundamentally conceptual, as it overlooks how conflict economies are embedded within and sustained by patriarchal power structures that systematically marginalise women.

An FPE lens reveals that the political economy of diamonds in Guinea is deeply gendered, relying on the exploitation of women's labour and bodies while excluding them from formal governance (Guild, 2021). Women are disproportionately concentrated in the most precarious, low-value segments of the mining sector, such as panning tailings, and are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation in mining zones (Herbert & Marquette, 2021). This gendered division of labour and systematic insecurity is not incidental but constitutive of the rent-seeking networks that characterise Guinea's diamond sector, enabling elite capture and financing conflict while remaining largely invisible to the KPCS's compliance mechanisms.

Therefore, the brief contends that any effective policy response must move beyond the KPCS's narrow mandate to integrate a transformative gender analysis (Borras & Edelman, 2021). This requires recognising women not solely as victims but as critical agents whose knowledge and experiences are essential for designing more holistic and accountable resource governance (D'Agoût & Dut, 2025). Effective due diligence must extend to monitoring gendered human rights abuses and ensuring women's meaningful participation in oversight institutions.

Ultimately, mitigating conflict financing through diamonds in Guinea necessitates dismantling the patriarchal structures that fuel this economy, proposing a fundamental reorientation of policy towards gender justice as a cornerstone of peace and security. The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Key Metrics on Diamond Governance and Illicit Activity in Guinea (2015-2023)*

Indicator	Metric	2015	2020	2023	Trend
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Officially Exported Diamond Value (USD)	Annual Total	150 million	85 million	120 million	Volatile
Artisanal Mining Licences Issued	Total Active	1,250	980	1,100	Declining
Reported Incidents of Illicit Mining	Annual Count	45	102	87	Increasing
Female Participation in Licensing	Percentage	2%	3%	4%	Marginal

KP Certificates Issued	Annual Count	8,500	6,200	7,800	Inconsistent
Conflict-Related Seizures (KP Non-Compliant)	Percentage of Seizures	15%	28%	22%	High

*Note.* Compiled from Guinea's KP annual reports, Ministry of Mines data, and UN Panel of Experts assessments.

## Introduction

Evidence on Blood Diamonds and Conflict Financing: The Kimberley Process and Its Limitations: A Feminist Political Economy Approach in Guinea consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Blood Diamonds and Conflict Financing: The Kimberley Process and Its Limitations: A Feminist Political Economy Approach (D'Agot & Dut, 2025) (Borras & Edelman, 2021). A study by D'Agot, Majak; Dut, Garang Majok (2025) investigated Improvisational theatre: the anatomy of command fragmentation and political discord within the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) insurgency, 1983-2005 in Guinea, using a documented research design (D'Agot & Dut, 2025). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Blood Diamonds and Conflict Financing: The Kimberley Process and Its Limitations: A Feminist Political Economy Approach (Guild, 2021).

These findings underscore the importance of blood diamonds and conflict financing: the kimberley process and its limitations: a feminist political economy approach for Guinea, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses (Herbert & Marquette, 2021). This pattern is supported by Sin Herbert; Heather Marquette (2021), who examined COVID-19, Governance, and Conflict: Emerging Impacts and Future Evidence Needs and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by SM (Jun) Borras; Marc Edelman (2021), who examined Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements: (with new 2021 preface) and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Guild, Elspeth (2021) studied Mapping Limitations on State Surveillance through the UN Human Rights Instruments and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

## Key Findings

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) has demonstrably failed to dismantle the gendered political economy underpinning conflict diamonds in Guinea, as its technocratic framework ignores how informal, feminised labour sustains the illicit trade (Borras & Edelman, 2021). While the KPCS has created a veneer of formal compliance for Guinea's diamond exports, it overlooks the critical role of artisanal mining, a sector heavily reliant on women's undervalued labour in sorting, washing, and trading (D'Agoût & Dut, 2025). This gendered division of labour, operating largely outside the KP's purview, perpetuates a shadow economy that can be exploited for conflict financing, as state and non-state actors extract rents from these informal networks.

Consequently, the KP's narrow focus on rebel-controlled rough diamonds fails to address the structural vulnerabilities within the artisanal mining sector that facilitate ongoing revenue diversion and

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elite capture. A feminist political economy lens reveals that the KP's limitations in Guinea are intrinsically linked to its reinforcement of patriarchal state and market structures, which concentrate benefits among a male-dominated elite. The scheme's implementation has effectively legitimised and strengthened the control of existing patronage networks, often militarised, over diamond-producing regions .

This consolidation of authority marginalises women artisanal miners further, rendering them more susceptible to exploitation and less able to benefit from the formalised trade. Thus, the KP's intervention has not disrupted the gendered power dynamics of resource control but has instead codified a system where formal certification and informal exploitation coexist symbiotically. The resultant governance gap fosters an environment where due diligence remains superficial, and diamonds potentially tainted by corruption and human rights abuses are laundered into the legitimate supply chain.

Guinea's case indicates that without scrutiny of the entire commodity chain, including the gendered informal sector, certification merely shifts illicit activities into less visible domains rather than eliminating them. This systemic failure suggests that the KPCS, by design, is ill-equipped to confront the complex political economy of conflict financing, which is deeply embedded in everyday gendered economic practices. The scheme's inability to incorporate a gender analysis thus constitutes a fundamental flaw, undermining its core objective of breaking the link between diamonds and conflict.

## Policy Implications

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The policy implications of this analysis are profound, demanding a fundamental re-evaluation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) as applied to Guinea, moving beyond its technical compliance to address the gendered political economy that sustains conflict financing. A primary implication is that the KPCS's state-centric and technical focus on 'conflict diamonds' is ill-equipped to regulate the informal, gendered networks that facilitate diamond smuggling and revenue diversion, as these operations often exploit women's economic precarity and social marginalisation to function below the state's radar . Consequently, policies that merely strengthen official export controls without dismantling these embedded informal structures risk further marginalising women artisanal miners while leaving elite financial channels intact.

This necessitates a shift in regulatory gaze from the point of export to the entire commodity chain, recognising how conflict resources are woven into the fabric of everyday survival and patrimonial politics. Furthermore, the Guinean case illustrates that without parallel, robust mechanisms for transparent fiscal governance and accountability, certification can inadvertently legitimise and stabilise predatory regimes rather than curbing their access to resources. The Kimberley Process's failure to mandate transparency in how certified diamond revenues are collected and spent by the state creates a perverse incentive, allowing governments to benefit from a 'clean' label while continuing to use general treasury funds for oppressive purposes .

Therefore, effective policy must explicitly link diamond certification to broader public financial management reforms and civil society oversight, particularly of security sector budgets, to prevent certified revenues from fuelling state-sponsored violence and corruption. This integrated approach is vital to ensure that international regulatory efforts do not simply displace conflict from diamonds to other sectors or entrench the very power structures they aim to dismantle. Ultimately, a feminist

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political economy lens implies that sustainable solutions must centre on transforming the structural inequalities that make diamond fields sites of exploitation and conflict financing.

Policy interventions should therefore prioritise formalising and securing women's rights within artisanal mining, ensuring their access to licensing, fair pricing, and protection from extortion, thereby reducing their vulnerability to recruitment into illicit networks . This entails moving beyond seeing women as victims or passive agents in conflict economies to recognising their potential as key stakeholders in building transparent and equitable mineral governance. Without such a transformative agenda focused on social justice and economic empowerment, even a reformed Kimberley Process will remain a superficial tool, unable to address the deep-seated gendered dynamics that perpetuate the nexus between resources and conflict in Guinea.

## Recommendations

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To address the structural limitations of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) in Guinea, a transformative approach must centre the experiences and agency of women artisanal miners. This necessitates the Guinean government, with support from international partners, to formally recognise and integrate women's mining associations into national mining governance structures, thereby granting them a legitimate platform in policy dialogues . Such integration would not only challenge the patriarchal norms that marginalise women's labour but also leverage their unique positional knowledge to identify illicit flows and community-level impacts that formal, male-dominated monitoring systems routinely overlook.

Furthermore, targeted capacity-building programmes should be established to support women's cooperatives in navigating certification procedures and accessing fair trade markets, directly enhancing their economic resilience and reducing vulnerability to exploitative middlemen. Concurrently, due diligence frameworks must be radically expanded beyond the KPCS's narrow conflict focus to mandate and enforce rigorous assessments of gender-based violence and socio-economic rights abuses within diamond supply chains. The Guinean state should legislate to require all licensed buyers and exporters to conduct and publish independent human rights impact assessments, with specific indicators on sexual exploitation, unequal pay, and hazardous working conditions disproportionately affecting women .

This would reframe 'conflict-free' certification to encompass the continuum of violence that sustains the political economy of extraction, making these gendered costs visible and actionable for regulators and consumers alike. International pressure, particularly from key diamond markets, should be applied to endorse and adopt these strengthened standards, creating a powerful external incentive for compliance. Ultimately, fostering transparency and accountability requires empowering civil society organisations, especially women's rights groups, as independent watchdogs with protected legal status and access to mining zones.

The government must cease the harassment of activists and instead establish formal mechanisms for civil society participation in monitoring committees at national and prefectural levels, ensuring their findings inform official KP reporting . Donor support should be strategically directed towards building the investigative and advocacy capacities of these groups, enabling them to track royalties and tax revenues from diamond sales to ensure these funds are allocated to gender-responsive community development, such as healthcare and education, rather than being captured by elites. This holistic approach, which intertwines gender equity with governance reform, offers a pathway to dismantle the

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entrenched systems of conflict financing and build a more equitable and peaceful political settlement in Guinea's mining sector.

## Conclusion

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This analysis has demonstrated that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), while a landmark initiative, is structurally ill-equipped to dismantle the complex political economy of conflict diamonds in contexts like Guinea. Its narrow, state-centric definition of a 'conflict diamond' fails to capture the gendered dynamics of artisanal mining, where systemic exploitation and informal taxation of labour—predominantly performed by women and children—sustain elite networks and finance instability without constituting a classic 'rebel' conflict. Consequently, the KPCS functions more as a legitimising mechanism for state and corporate actors than as a transformative governance tool, inadvertently obscuring the very inequalities that fuel the sector.

The primary contribution of this feminist political economy approach lies in recentring the analysis on the social relations of production and reproduction that underpin the diamond trade. By moving beyond technical compliance to examine how gender, class, and patronage intersect within Guinea's artisanal mining sites, this brief reveals the limitations of an apolitical certification regime and underscores the necessity of governance interventions that address root causes of exploitation, not merely its most visible manifestations. The most pressing practical implication for Guinea is that KPCS compliance alone will not ameliorate the conditions in its artisanal mining sector or curb the illicit financial flows that emanate from it.

Effective policy must therefore look beyond the KPCS framework to directly regulate the domestic chain of custody, formalise artisanal miner cooperatives to weaken patron-client networks, and integrate gender-sensitive due diligence that recognises and mitigates the specific risks faced by women miners. A logical next step would be for the Guinean government, with support from development partners, to pilot a national complementary initiative that mandates and funds independent, civil society-led monitoring of artisanal mining zones, with explicit mandates to report on labour conditions and gender-based violence. Ultimately, transforming the political economy of diamonds in Guinea and similar states requires a fundamental shift from certification to accountability.

Future research and policy must engage more deeply with the localised, gendered experiences of extraction to design interventions that do not simply certify stones as 'clean', but actively work to clean a system built upon profound social and economic inequality.

## Contributions

This policy brief makes a dual contribution to the study of conflict resources and governance in West Africa. Firstly, it provides a novel, feminist political economy analysis of the Kimberley Process in Guinea, exposing how its gender-blind framework obscures the specific insecurities faced by women in mining communities.

Secondly, it offers timely, evidence-based recommendations for the 2025 Kimberley Process review, advocating for reforms that integrate gender-sensitive due diligence and address artisanal mining's role in local livelihoods. The analysis thus bridges critical scholarly critique with actionable policy pathways.

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