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Original Research Article

Mixed Reports and Conflicts of Jurisdiction in the Organisation and Operation of CDLMs in the Context of Sustainable Development Around Mining Areas in the Lôh Djiboua Region of Côte d'Ivoire

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Abstract: Drawing on diverse research experiences on occupations linked to the exploitation of mineral resources since 2014, this paper offers a critical reflection on the existence of the CDLM as an instrument of mining governance and its relation to economic, social, environmental, and ethical development in the Agbaou Mine area. The analysis reveals that, despite institutional measures aimed at integrating local populations through mechanisms of sound mining governance, the living and working conditions of the host communities remain ambivalent. Based on a qualitative analysis of a corpus of data derived from both fundamental and applied research, this contribution highlights three major findings: (i) the composition, mode of designation, and organisational arrangements within the mining sector do not evolve within a genuinely participatory framework; (ii) the functioning of the CDLM stands in stark contrast to that of village institutions; and (iii) after more than a decade of activity at the Agbaou Mine, the overall assessment of the host communities' quality of life remains mixed.

Keywords: Mining Exploitation, Compensation, CDLM, Mining Governance, Community Development.

INTRODUCTION

In Côte d'Ivoire, Law No. 2014-138 of 24 March 2014, establishing the Mining Code, stipulates in Article 125 the creation of Local Mining Development Committees (CDLM) in the various mining zones. The role of the mining sector in the country's economy is significant; according to the National Development Plan (PND) 2021–2025, the sector's contribution to GDP was projected at 4% by the end of 2020.

The contribution of the mining sector to economic growth in sub-Saharan African countries is well established. It represents an increasingly important pillar of development for countries endowed with mineral resources. Mining activities are regulated by norms and legal frameworks, as laid down in the Mining Code. In the Ivorian context, SODEMI and the Mining Administration are the principal regulatory actors. These institutions are responsible for ensuring availability, planning, regulation, granting of exploration and exploitation permits, and the monitoring of mining activities. Drawing on Côte d'Ivoire's accumulated experience in mining, one may focus particularly on gold production as a case study. In this respect, gold production rose from 23.54 tonnes in 2015 to 51.185 tonnes in 2023, and is projected to reach 54 tonnes by 2025, according to the PND (2021–2025). The mining sector's contribution to GDP is expected to increase from 3% in 2022 to 6% in 2025. Such figures, however, must be analysed in light of their implications for the living conditions of host communities.

The general observation indicates that economic, social, and environmental development remains far below what might reasonably have been expected. Mining, beyond being a robust lever of economic growth and a driver of GDP, ought to translate concretely into improved standards of living for communities. Yet this has not been the case in the Lôh Djiboua region, as illustrated by the examples of the Agbahou gold mine and the Lauzoua manganese mine.

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This situation is further underlined by the fact that the establishment of CDLMs only came into effect in 2014. Their creation was prompted by mounting calls from beneficiary populations and mining professionals for the adoption of genuine strategies to ensure better living and working conditions. After ten to fifteen years of experience with industrial mining installations, the development outcomes for host localities remain mixed. This has often given rise to claims and protests, at times disrupting company operations, even though the establishment procedures of these companies were legally compliant. From such protests to the growth of informal mining, which undermines the limits defined by official concessions, the State has been compelled to adopt remedial measures, hence the necessity of CDLMs as instruments intended to foster local management of resources and dividends from mining operations.

According to Géronimi and Mainguy (2020), drawing on earlier works including those of Collier and Goderis (2012), many Southern countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, witnessed improved growth trajectories during the 2000s. Nevertheless, their analysis highlights a marked contrast between this theoretical prospect and empirical reality, with industrial mines often coinciding with the stagnation or deterioration of living conditions among host populations.

Empirical evidence suggests that communities living around mining zones such as in Lôh Djiboua continue to endure precarious social conditions. In other words, impoverishment and vulnerability rise in tandem with the expansion of industrial mining. Living, production, transformation, and consumption conditions deteriorate in the vicinity of mines. More strikingly, social imaginaries often reveal a perception that the greater the profits of the companies, the slimmer the chances of improved living conditions for local populations. Despite institutional measures and various governance instruments, including CDLMs, the living conditions of host communities remain, at best, ambivalent.

This paper proposes a scientific reading of the actions of CDLMs and their effectiveness in achieving developmental objectives within mining localities. Drawing on the case of the Agbahou mining zone in the Lôh Djiboua region, qualitative interviews were conducted and a corpus of primary data was constructed.

1. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, combining data from multiple research experiences and fieldwork related to the broader issue of mining exploitation. It is anchored in a long-term trajectory of inquiry, beginning with research conducted for a Master's dissertation defended in 2013 at Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire). Subsequently, in 2017, within the framework of a research project aimed at better understanding the factors and dynamics of conflict in mining zones and promoting mechanisms for peaceful prevention and management, a research guide was developed employing the Network Mapping Methodology (Kastrup, 2015). This enabled a more in-depth analysis of conflicts around mining zones.

In methodological terms, the project relied on a combination of focus groups, individual interviews, and complementary interviews. These techniques were applied to key actors identified through networking at the project's launch workshop, which brought together stakeholders in the mining sector. Four major categories of actors were thus targeted: the State, mining operators, non-productive organisations, and local communities.

More specifically, through interviews, focus groups, and complementary exchanges, the research team engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Public Prosecutor, Sub-Prefect, local elected officials, conflict management committees, landowners and tenants, representatives of the mining companies, artisanal miners, the Regional Directorate of Mines, the Regional Directorate of Agriculture, local leaders and elites, compensated populations, the Labour Inspector, village chieftaincies, and CDLM representatives. Once a mapping of actors and their degrees of involvement in conflict production and management had been established, the CDLM emerged as a key actor. Its position, role, and significance in the field of mining conflicts were subsequently clarified through additional field missions conducted in 2020, 2022, and 2023. In this later phase, research tools focused specifically on the organisational and operational modalities of CDLMs in the Agbahou mining localities, with particular attention paid to community representatives, including youth, women, and traditional authorities.

In addition to interview data, documentary sources relating to the creation, composition, and functioning of the Agbahou CDLM were collected. These included budgetary reports since 2020 in the Department of Divo (Lôh Djiboua Region), mission reports on operational activities, as well as legal texts regulating CDLMs, which provide the institutional framework for this governance instrument. The study also triangulated workshop reports intended for mining operators and sectoral stakeholders, particularly those from the Department of Divo.

In sum, the corpus of data was constructed from Master's research, scientific research projects in the mining sector, field missions on CDLM functioning, and progressive documentary research.

This article focuses on the Lôh Djiboua Region, particularly the Agbahou gold mine, encompassing the localities of Niafouta, Zégo, Zaroko, Douaville, and Agbahou. The data corpus was analysed through content analysis, yielding three analytical axes: (i) from organisational structures to competence conflicts within CDLMs; (ii) from CDLM operational modes to village organisational structures: towards an ambivalent relationship; and (iii) CDLMs in Lôh Djiboua: between improvements and deteriorations in host communities' living conditions. These three axes constitute the principal findings presented below.

2. RESULTS

2.1. From Organisational Structure to Conflicts of Competence

The organisation and composition of the CDLM are institutionally regulated by the Mining Code of 24 March 2014. According to this provision, the required statutes, the profiles of the leaders, as well as the constituent bodies, are clearly defined in advance. The role of each leader is likewise stipulated. Under this provision, the CDLM intervenes in the domains of infrastructure and basic equipment development, the strengthening of basic social services, the promotion of employment, the development of the local economy, and the enhancement of human capital. Its mission is therefore to implement and monitor the execution of projects conceived for these purposes, to ensure the management of the local development fund, and to supervise expenditure.

Operationally, the CDLM consists of a president, namely the Prefect of the Divo Region; vice-presidents, represented by local elected officials; a Secretary-General, who is the Regional Director of Mines for Lôh Djiboua; the Sub-Prefects of Didoko, Hiré, and Divo; the Members of Parliament for Hiré, Didoko, and Divo; the Mayors of the municipalities of Divo and Hiré; the village chief or his representative; the youth leader; and the women's representative of each host community of the mine. In the case of Agbaou Mine, which constitutes the focus of this study, the host localities are Zégo, Niafouta, Douaville, Zaroko, and Agbaou. Each locality designates three representatives to sit within the CDLM.

In its mining experience, Côte d'Ivoire has been confronted with challenges relating to development and the improvement of host communities. Increasingly, zones of poverty and deteriorating living conditions have emerged. This has resulted in widespread dissatisfaction, claims, and strikes around mining sites. In response, the Mining Code of 24 March 2014 instituted the creation of CDLMs, with the objective of providing mining communities with the necessary levers to improve their living and working conditions. It was in this context that the Agbaou CDLM was established. Its funding derives from the allocation of 0.5% of the turnover of the operating company, in accordance with Article 7 of Ordinance No. 2014-148 of 26 March 2014. This fund is deposited in an Ivorian financial institution, and any transaction requires two mandatory signatures: one from a representative of the mining company and one from the CDLM.

Given such a composition and institutional framework, the attainment of the objectives—namely, the improvement of the living and working conditions of the communities—should not, in principle, encounter significant delay. Yet field interviews reveal that local populations question the composition of the CDLM, insofar as they feel relegated to a secondary role. As a youth representative from the locality of Zégo observed:

> *"It is true that they gave us money to compensate us, and at first we were happy, but had we known this is how things would turn out, we would never have accepted. Now it feels as if we mean nothing to them. Whenever you try to raise your voice, they say the company is under no obligation, since you have already been compensated. They meet, they hold their sessions, they make their choices among themselves in collaboration with the mutual association's president, and afterwards they merely inform us. It is the Governor who presides; once he has spoken, what more can we say? And he always sides with the Mine. We know very well that all this money will never reach us, because it will remain in the hands of a small group. They care nothing for what we want; they only do what they have already decided, and that is the end of it."*

Such words reflect the ambivalence with which host communities perceive the composition of the CDLM. They believe that within such a configuration it is difficult for their perspectives to be heard, since those who sit within the committee hold decision-making power that places them above the communities, thereby creating an imbalance in debate. In addition, in the popular imagination of the indigenous host populations, the CDLM is conceived as a continuation of compensation, though this time extended to the entire community and not merely to directly affected persons (PAPs). On this matter, Mr Djoro, from the locality of Niafouta, remarked:

> *"When it was about compensation, they told us it was only for those with property inside the perimeter. But with the CDLM we see nothing at all. Apart from the health centre they helped rehabilitate to serve Niafouta and Agbaou, if you ask anyone, they will tell you they do not even know what the CDLM is. Because quite simply we do not feel their actions on the ground. If all this money is only for constructing or rehabilitating schools, health centres, and teachers' housing, then what is the role of the State? And what about zones without mines—how do they manage?"*

These statements reveal a divergence between institutional and social understandings of the CDLM's role and mission. Community actors respond according to their own interpretation of the instrument. Their conclusion that it is ineffective reflects the dissatisfaction of expectations initially invested in its creation. At this juncture, one may reasonably argue that the composition and the method of member designation inherently contain the seeds of conflicts of competence and power struggles within its functioning.

2.2. From the Functioning of the CDLMs to the Structure of Village Organisation

According to the institutional provisions governing their creation, composition, organisation, and operation, the existence of these instruments is normatively framed. Yet, a closer examination reveals that their institutional functioning does not correspond to the practices embedded within traditional village institutions.

With regard to the selection of localities, the decree establishing the CDLM stipulates that community representatives shall consist of local elected officials and three (3) representatives from each host locality. This process of designation is at odds with the social configuration of village organisation. The position of gold within local cosmologies and the social representations associated with it clearly indicate that there are actors within the village organisational structure who are designated and recognised as custodians of the divinity linked to gold. As explained by a member of a landowning family whose plots are identified as gold-bearing:

> *"Nowadays, anyone rises up and speaks about gold as if it had always been so. Gold has its rightful owners. And among them, there are those who are visible and those who are not. But it is between them that discussions and agreements are made. Often here, people take decisions without even consulting us first. The way things are organised and function, even if it is said to be for the benefit of the village, if you look closely, resources are shared among a few without our knowledge."*

This first level of contradiction emerges as a mechanism of exclusion of communities in the management of the CDLM. It may be perceived as a form of precipitous decision-making within governance arenas. While institutional actors and local elected officials denounce inconsistencies in the behaviour of communities, they also highlight recurrent conflicts of competence when common decisions are to be taken. As noted by officials of the Regional Directorate of Mines:

> *"If, during meetings, the Prefect is absent, it becomes difficult to reach an agreement. For instance, if the budget allows the construction or rehabilitation of a single school, which locality should be chosen among the six host communities? Or to take a more concrete example: the mining company was to construct a health centre for the villages of Niafouta and Agbahou. On the question of site selection, the two localities could not agree, and the project was delayed for two years. Ultimately, the Regional Prefect decided that the health centre should be built at a site equidistant from the two villages. Once completed, however, the centre was poorly attended because of its isolation."*

Around mining-related stakes, village actors often find themselves enmeshed in conflicts of interest. When transposed into the functioning of the CDLM, such conflicts become a resource legitimising the institutional mode of governance and the role of institutional actors. Everything suggests that communities struggle to reach consensus once engaged in interactions concerning mining activities.

The designation of activities to be undertaken also remains problematic. While the institutional framework specifies the CDLM's mandate, in practice its missions are frequently misaligned with both the real needs of communities and the prerogatives of the State. Thus far, its activities have largely focused on strengthening basic social infrastructure: construction of water towers, rehabilitation of schools, teachers' housing, and health centres, with a large share absorbed by recurrent expenditure. During interviews, the traditional authorities of Douaville and Zégo expressed that the 0.5% fund allocated to the CDLM does not benefit the local population. They explained that, rather than enabling youth employment or financing women's income-generating activities, the money is channelled towards projects presented as benefitting everyone. Yet, once the Mine closes and vast tracts of land have been lost, how are subsistence needs to be met? This question remains existential for host communities.

From this vantage point, the functioning of the CDLM appears unbalanced and bears the seeds of latent conflict. In this respect, it paradoxically emerges as a key actor in the genesis of conflict in mining zones such as Agbahou. This paradox prompts a fundamental question: how can an instrument designed to mitigate disparities and imbalances in the mining sector become, over time, a source of conflict? Under current conditions in Agbahou, a crisis of trust has surfaced among the different stakeholders. They are divided into two opposing categories: the first, comprising the Prefectoral and Ministerial authorities, local elected officials, and the mining company, views the CDLM positively, as it provides a framework for incorporating populations and their development needs; the second, consisting of community representatives, criticises the lack of transparency in fund management and perceives the instrument as a mask concealing the true expectations of the people. Such opposition reflects the actual relationships between the Mine, administrative authorities, local elected officials, and host communities a relationship characterised by distrust and suspicion.

The current mode of operation of this governance instrument reveals limitations of various kinds, which may be grouped into three categories. First, there are limitations linked to a non-inclusive design. From the outset, the CDLM displayed gaps rooted in its creation. For instance, difficulties regarding the nature of activities eligible for funding indicate that broad consultations were not adequately conducted at the time of its establishment. Such consultations would have enabled a clearer distinction between the specific expectations of communities and the sovereign obligations of the State towards all Ivorian citizens, including those around the Agbahou Mine. The same distinction applies to the responsibilities of the mining company.

Second, there are limitations arising from relations of domination in the CDLM's functioning. The composition of the General Assembly highlights the strong authority of the Prefect, whose role prevents genuine balance in deliberations. As one vice-president of the committee revealed in an interview, meetings and decisions are frequently prearranged among a select group of actors, of which he considered himself fortunate to be included. Such testimony points to internal arrangements whereby views are harmonised before being presented to other actors and communities. It would appear that the committee's president, namely the Regional Prefect, as arbitrator, consistently seeks to safeguard the continuity of mining operations.

Finally, there are limitations stemming from a lack of equity among actors operating within the CDLM's sphere of action. If equity is understood as the moderating principle of objective law (laws and administrative regulations), according to which each individual is entitled to fair, equal, and reasonable treatment, then it remains difficult on the basis of empirical evidence to affirm that this principle is effectively realised in practice. From the perspective of institutional, administrative, and corporate actors, the process is equitable. Conversely, from the standpoint of communities, it is improbable to claim that the CDLM's functioning is fair, given the modest achievements produced. In any case, consensus on equity remains elusive. From this dialectical position, it is clear that the expected outcomes of this instrument of mining governance have not been attained.

2.3. The CDLMs in the Lôh-Djiboua Region: Between the Improvement and the Deterioration of Living Conditions of Host Populations

The primary mission of the CDLM is to improve the living and working conditions of host communities. Since its establishment in 2014, this instrument has introduced a range of activities and initiatives aimed at achieving its objectives with respect to employment promotion and the development of the local economy. Beyond direct and indirect recruitment of local labour, however, the development of the local economy remains limited. With regard to the promotion of youth and women's empowerment, the CDLM's operations do not display clearly defined budgetary lines. An analysis of the statements of women's and youth leaders reveals a lack of support for initiatives geared towards the empowerment of these groups. The development of the local economy presupposes its transformation, which, in this case, entails the strengthening of local communities' economic activities. Yet, evidence from the field suggests that in larger localities such as Divo and Hiré, there is a new vibrancy attributable to the existence of the Mine. This is not the case for localities whose lands were requisitioned for mining operations, where instead one observes a flight of capital and human resources towards larger urban centres.

Commenting on this, a member of the women's bureau of Niafouta observed:

> *"We prefer the small-scale gold miners because at least they lived with us here, and when we ran restaurants business was good. Since they were expelled by the Prefect and his associates from the Mine, the village has been in misery nothing works, and all the young people have left to seek opportunities elsewhere. We give them our blessings because they were the ones who looked after us. Several times, during meetings, we submitted women's empowerment projects. But we have never received any funding. And when we try to find out why, the Governor reminds us that these are mere requests and that the company is under no obligation to act. We have understood everything, and so we are simply tired of asking."*

Such testimony reflects a form of resignation among women in host communities. Expecting nothing further in terms of improved living and working conditions indicates the breakdown of trust and the prevalence of relations of suspicion with the mining company and institutional actors.

Beyond the non-financing of income-generating activities (IGAs), precarious employment at the Mine also poses significant challenges. This is the case with "cajole" jobs, a technical term used to describe contractual workers. During the exploratory phase, labour was carried out manually under arduous conditions. Populations invested themselves with the promise that they would be prioritised in recruitment during the exploitation phase.

As one youth leader inAgbaou (2017) explained:

> *"At the beginning, it was us who did everything by hand, and we were not even paid well. But we accepted because, based on promises of employment and glossy brochures showing the prosperity the Mine would bring, our parents told us to do everything the Mine asked. At that time, no one spoke of 'impacted villages' or lack of qualifications. But once we had finished*

> *and the exploitation phase began, they sent us all home, telling us to 'stay alert'. We are still waiting it has now been five years. And during this time, they continue to recruit."*

Such discourse reveals a rupture between expectations and outcomes, leading to frustration and indignation. The reality of working for two weeks, a month, at most three months, only to be left unemployed again, becomes intolerable when hopes of stable employment drag on for years. From hope to disappointment, fear takes root, compelling populations to form networks of protest, often in opposition to the mine's management.

Beyond short-term employment, the lack of IGA funding, and the weak transformation of the local economy, the CDLM itself is increasingly designated as a central actor in conflicts surrounding the Agbaou Mine. Indeed, through actor mapping based on Network Mapping methodology, it emerges that the CDLM's composition, organisation, and functioning constantly come under challenge. One major reason lies in the nature of its investments, such as in 2016, when operating on the principle that each impacted village should benefit equally classrooms, teachers' housing, and infirmaries were built. Host communities, however, expressed disagreement, arguing that emphasis should have been placed on human capital development. For instance, they would have preferred training programmes in mining trades and the financing of income-generating projects, as physical infrastructure does not in itself create wealth.

A member of the women's association of Agbaou explained:

> *"The money that the Mine gives is substantial it is not insignificant. But it is the men managing the funds who do not take good decisions. All they think about is building schools and hospitals. But if you have nothing, how do you send children to school, and with what means do you go to hospital? If, for example, each family had one young person trained in mining skills, and if at least one project per family was financed, this would be a way of reducing poverty. Everyone would gain something, and there would be fewer frustrations. But we do not even know on what basis they make their decisions, since they hardly reflect our realities. For us women, for example, the Mine asked us to design projects they would finance. We submitted projects in three areas: agriculture, commerce, and livestock. But immediately, the Mine, through the community relations officer, told us they could only finance agricultural projects. What they forget is: where are we to practise agriculture, since there is no cultivable land left?"*

In Zégo, funds were used to construct the Sub-Prefect's residence. This situation was a source of conflict, as the population argued that housing the Sub-Prefect should not fall within their remit. They considered such expenditure to be unproductive investment. This in turn fuelled mistrust between local communities and Zégo's representatives within the CDLM.

3. DISCUSSION

In recalling the principal findings, this section seeks to confront them with existing scientific literature in order to identify both their limitations and their contributions to the understanding of the nexus between mining exploitation and the development of host communities.

The first finding highlights a conflict of competence within the organisation of the CDLM. It appears that the composition, mode of designation, and organisational framework do not evolve within a genuinely participatory context. This situation engenders overlapping roles and statuses among the actors involved. Such a result invites reflection on the very objectives for which CDLMs in general, and that of Agbaou in particular, were established namely, to stimulate investment in the mining sector at the local level with a view to promoting development. As formulated by Rubbers (2023), there has indeed been an increase in mining investments across Africa, especially in countries with strong mineral potential. He attributes this to the World Bank's injunctions encouraging states to massively privatise the mining sector.

One of the consequences of these measures has been sustained economic growth (5%) in such countries, albeit accompanied by adverse effects such as the lack of development within local communities. In a similar vein, Maréchal (2013), in his contribution on a globalised vision of development through pan-African mining exploitation, argues that genuine local development sensitive to community specificities necessarily requires a better mobilisation of resources derived from the mining sector what he terms a form of "resource nationalism". These positions find empirical resonance in the reflections of Belem (2006) on the Malian case, which moved from the 1991 Mining Code to that of 1999, with the principal innovation being the creation of a monthly fund of 5,000 USD aimed at addressing disparities and inequalities in the development of mining communities. The establishment of such an instrument emerged in a context of mining boom, contrasting starkly with the stagnation of local development. These scientific contributions on the creation, composition, and organisation of the CDLM illustrate the transversal character of local mining development. Nevertheless, its application reveals discrepancies that constitute real challenges, particularly in terms of actors' understanding and the clarification of the missions and competences entrusted to the CDLM within the field of mining exploitation.

The second finding examines the functioning of the CDLM in light of traditional village organisation. It emerges that the CDLM's operations are at odds with those of village institutions, a dissonance which generates conflicts of interest in the management of this instrument. Whereas institutional frameworks clearly delineate the place of local communities, in practice their margin of manoeuvre remains minimal. This empirical reality reflects the conflict-ridden relationship in which communities are embedded vis-à-vis mining companies and administrative authorities. At this juncture, Karka (2021), in her research on environmental conflicts in Northern Greece, recalls that such conflicts are as old as mining itself, dating back to the 5th and 4th centuries BC. What comes to the fore is the excessive power of mining companies in their relations of domination over local populations. Beyond the historical dimension, certain social frameworks also contribute to the amplification of these conflicts. In this respect, the IGF Report (2023) identifies several rationalities explaining the low participation rate of women in the mining sector, including sexist attitudes, violence, harassment, and gender-based discrimination constraints which inhibit women's effective participation. This position is reinforced by Kouadio (2016), who highlights the non-sustainability of certain mining jobs, particularly at the Bonikro mine in south-eastern Côte d'Ivoire. He argues that the recruitment of local labour by the mine for temporary manual work undermines agricultural labour and threatens the survival of farming activities, thereby jeopardising subsistence. At this stage, it becomes legitimate to question the quality of life of local populations in relation to mining exploitation.

The third finding interrogates precisely this dimension the quality of life of local populations in connection with mining exploitation. It emerges that after more than a decade of activity at the Agbaou Mine, the assessment of host communities' living conditions remains mixed. Following the initial compensation measures, communities have faced a return to a concrete reality characterised by the loss of fertile land, lack of steady income (monthly, quarterly, or yearly), and the massive exodus of youth, resulting in a shortage of agricultural labour. One of the immediate consequences is the abandonment of farming activities in favour of informal extractive economies. This transformation in production and consumption practices is motivated by communities' aspirations towards a more regular and sustained improvement of their living standards. Seen from this perspective, Bouchard-Bastien (2017) aptly recalls the close relationship between mining exploitation and quality of life, noting that despite some positive effects, precarious living conditions remain evident in mining areas. Similarly, Géromini and Mainguy (2020) emphasise the vulnerable and uncertain trajectories of mineral-dependent developing countries. Unlike other economic sectors, mining-led growth, they contend, remains fragile. This fragility undermines mining governance and its purported contribution to national development trajectories. In response to the persistent vulnerabilities of populations in mining zones, Koffi *et al*., (2018), in a study on the Agbaou mining area, underscore the strategies of resorting to artisanal mining and the establishment of local social regulations to manage and allocate such activity. In short, direct negotiations with gold exploiters provide regular income, enabling actors to assert and legitimise their social status within the village structure.

CONCLUSION

This contribution forms part of a broader body of scientific writing on occupations related to the exploitation of mineral resources in Côte d'Ivoire. It provides an objective and empirical examination of the CDLM as an instrument of mining sector governance, grounded in the lived realities of communities surrounding the Agbaou gold mine in the Lôh Djiboua region. Three major findings emerge from the corpus of data: (i) the composition, mode of designation, and organisational framework do not evolve within a genuinely participatory context; (ii) the functioning of the CDLM diverges fundamentally from that of village institutions; and (iii) after more than a decade of mining activity, the quality of life of host populations remains ambivalent. Taken together, these findings reveal the vulnerabilities within the social structure of mining communities. They also open up further scientific reflection on mechanisms of stakeholder participation. In this regard, compensation schemes in the mining sector should be reimagined as shareholding in investment capital, thereby ensuring that compensation functions as a mechanism for safeguarding livelihoods. Rather than a one-off payment, beneficiaries would gain progressively increasing dividends commensurate with the profitability of the mine. Such an approach would facilitate the establishment of sustainable, rather than transitory, sources of income.

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