

Bridging global standards and local voices: Aligning the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and community-led monitoring to enhance environmental, social, and governance frameworks in mining

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Abstract: Amongst transnational industries, the extractive sector presents unique challenges, arising from its socio-political and environmental dimensions. Considering the major involvement of these industries in world economies, countries that sit on most of the natural resources often struggle with a lack of transparency and weak governing bodies. This has resulted in the resource curse in which communities meant to benefit from the natural resources face several mining induced challenges like economic stagnation, and severe violations of their human and environmental rights including the right to safe and clean water, right to a healthy environment, and right to food. Reviewing key legal frameworks at the global level, including the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the paper demonstrates that transparency remains deficient across the board. In reality, accountability within the extractive sector continues to follow a top-down framework, contrasting with the need for a tailored community-led approach centred on environmental, social, and governance principles. In this context, this paper argues for an alternative type of monitoring which prioritises the people affected by the extractive industries. Turning to community-led monitoring (CLM) in addition to existing frameworks like EITI, this research illustrates the complexity and the realities of accountability and transparency in mining. In order to make this case, this paper uses qualitative desk research to explore the interactions between community-led processes and EITI, particularly looking at transparency initiatives, participatory governance, and resource justice. It further illustrates that although EITI is essential to ensure transparency through disclosures of revenues, contracts, and beneficial ownership it cannot enforce compliance or manage the highly localised social and environmental factors unique to specific mining sites. Therefore, CLM helps address the gaps left by a standalone EITI approach and suggest pathways for integrating CLM into EITI as a complementary framework that take into consideration the lived experiences of communities to influence decision making. Taking a more critical approach to community-led practices, the research also points out some limitations of this approach including lack of capacity, shrinking civic spaces, and power asymmetries between corporations, Governments, and local actors.

Keywords: community-led monitoring; extractive industries transparency initiative, transparency; environmental social governance; corporate accountability

1. Introduction

Over 50 countries rely on oil, gas, and solid minerals as their primary sources of Government and export revenues (Transparency and Accountability Initiative 2011; Hailu and Kipgen 2017). Extractive industries transform natural resources into products that contribute to sustaining the modern lifestyle of countless people across the globe, with the majority being based in a handful of countries (Schaffartzik and Pichler 2017). Hence, in today's global economic system, extractive industries play a vital role both in the lives of people and in fuelling global food and energy systems. Nevertheless, it also has profound and multifaceted risks to both people and the environment, especially if there is a lack of proper regulations to

monitor the transparency and accountability of transnational corporations (Acosta 2010; Besada et al. 2015). The process and outcome of the extractive industries and their operations have proved to cause severe environmental damage that affects peasant communities, rural women, and workers, amongst others. Environmental and social damages include contamination of water and the overuse of water leading to water scarcity, land degeneration and instability, as well as waste generation leading to air and land pollution while the negative effects to vulnerable communities includes loss of lands and livelihoods and human rights violations (Anaf et al. 2019). In addition to this, factors such as overharvesting, unsustainable utilization of resources, and weak regulations can harm the biodiversity and environmental balance (Kippenberg 2024).

These risks are particularly acute in developing countries, where many mines operate in contexts marked by weak regulatory systems, poor living conditions, and limited social protections (Schaffartzik and Pichler 2017). According to UNCAC (2022), although the extraction of natural resources is closely connected to environmental degradation, the linkage is often overlooked and the lack of accountability and transparency in the extractive industries has a higher cost. Hence, strong governance, sustainable practices, and compliance with international safety standards are needed in order to benefit from the industry while reducing its risks. To mitigate the risk of increased corruption in countries with natural resources, social and environmental harms, transparency, civic participation, and public accountability is required (Open Government Partnership 2025).

In response to these governance challenges, global accountability frameworks have emerged. One of the prominent global standards for promoting transparency and accountability by publishing detailed reports is the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). Other accountability mechanisms, including the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), also provide important guidance for responsible business conduct. However, although global standards and initiatives are important frameworks for accountability it may not reflect all the aspects faced by the communities living near mining sites, such as social, environmental, and governance challenges. Hence, it is important to explore the potential of adopting a community-led monitoring (CLM) approach, as this allows community members to have a say in the decisions that directly affect them and increases the accountability of actors involved in the extractive industries.

1.1. Problem statement

Despite the presence of global mechanisms such as the UNGPs and the EITI, accountability and transparency in the extractive sector are still mainly controlled by top-down reporting and compliance systems (Faanu et al. 2026). These approaches have helped improve transparency, but

they stop short at addressing the actual challenges that communities living in close proximity to mining sites face. It is important to explore CLM as a key approach in order to ensure local voices are included, strengthen accountability, and reduce risk of corruption and social exclusion (Oloba and Makuya 2026). However, there is a dearth of research on the effectiveness of these approaches in connection with global initiatives like EITI to improve environmental, social, and governance (ESG) compliance. This paper contributes to that by designing a pathway for institutionalising community monitoring within EITI validation and accountability processes.

1.2. Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions to address these gaps:

1. How does CLM enhance transparency and accountability in the extractive sector?
2. What limitations does the EITI face in promoting effective ESG accountability from the perspective of affected communities?
3. How can CLM and the EITI be integrated to strengthen ESG accountability in the extractive sector?

1.3. Significance of the study

This study adds to the existing knowledge on participatory governance and justice of resources by examining how community monitoring works to improve corporate accountability with the use of EITI reporting as well as the challenges the communities face. The study also identifies the best practices of the local and the global systems that support inclusive governance, anti-corruption efforts, and sustainable resource management.

1.4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative doctrinal research design based on documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include international and regional legal instruments, policy documents, official reports, and publications from institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the EITI. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and book chapters retrieved from electronic databases, including Web of Science, using keywords such as CLM, extractive industries, EITI, transparency, accountability, and ESG. The collected materials are subjected to critical doctrinal analysis to examine the interaction between ESG principles and the EITI, with particular emphasis on the role of CLM in promoting transparency, accountability, sustainable resource governance, and equitable benefit-sharing. Given the study's global scope, literature published from 2015 onwards is prioritised to capture recent developments in ESG and extractive governance, while

earlier sources are included where necessary to provide historical, legal, and conceptual context.

2. Literature review

2.1. ESG compliance in mining industries

Recent literature on ESG compliance in the mining industry highlights an important evolution from voluntary corporate practices to increasingly mandatory legal frameworks. Historically, mining companies relied on voluntary sustainability initiatives, industry standards, or corporate social responsibility commitments to demonstrate compliance (Duho 2024). However, regulatory developments in recent years have begun to introduce enforceable obligations. The European Union's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive establish clear duties for companies to identify and mitigate adverse human rights and environmental impacts across their operations and supply chains (European Commission 2025). Similar developments include Canada's Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act and proposed climate disclosure rules by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. These frameworks underscore a growing recognition that voluntary commitments alone are insufficient to protect rights and the environment (Bueno et al. 2024). Nevertheless, jurisdictional fragmentation and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to limit their effectiveness, particularly in regions with limited governance capacity and heavy dependence on mineral revenues (Amoakoh et al. 2026).

2.2. EITI

A great number of resource-rich countries rely on mineral resources to boost economic growth, yet local people are often deprived of the benefits of natural resources due to corruption and mismanagement leading to the resource curse (Narh 2025). Recognising the negative effects of the resource curse and the lack of transparency and accountability in resource-rich countries, the EITI was established in 2003 (EITI 2024; Sequeira et al. 2016). A coalition of stakeholders, including Governments, corporations, investment institutions, and civil society, came together to establish 12 principles as standards for proper resource management, transparency, accountability, revenue disclosure, and public engagement (Sovacool and Andrews 2015, 185). The EITI establishes a reporting mechanism that requires corporations and State Parties to disclose information regarding resource management, including revenues, mining contracts, beneficial ownership in corporations, production, export, and social and environmental impacts of industrial activities. The initiative is designed to assist stakeholders such as civil society, corporations and Governments to promote and improve corporate governance and resource accountability and make available necessary data for informed policy making (EITI 2025).

The State Parties establish an independent Multistakeholder Group (MSG) that fairly represents key stakeholders, including Government, private sector, and civil society organisations. The MSG monitors EITI implementation and assess compliance of State Parties with the transparency standards through a validation process. Active stakeholder engagement, especially the participation of civil society is fundamental in the evaluation process (Kinda and Thiombiano 2023). A crucial aspect of the validation process includes assessment of civil society involvement and press freedom, fostering community empowerment to scrutinise action of the Government, address mismanagement of resources, and ensure transparency in extractive industries (Sequeira et al. 2016, 5).

However, the voluntary nature of enforcement of EITI principles raises questions on the reason for resource-rich countries to join the EITI. It is argued that resource-rich countries join the initiative to improve their reputation internationally and attract foreign direct investment (Fraser 2022). Foreign investors demand greater transparency as a motivation, which influences their investment decisions (Kolstad and Wiig 2025). Countries with lower transparency levels risk losing investment, so they are compelled by the “transparency incentive” to join EITI and attract investment. The benefits of joining the EITI is highlighted by Svocool and Andrews (2015), illustrating that EITI stimulate access to information to enable citizens to analyse Government revenues and expenditure; improved governance through transparency and accountability for corrupt practices; create a level playing field for companies by minimising unhealthy competition; decreasing political risk such as coup d’etats through strengthening transparency and creating an enabling environment for foreign investment; and fostering interaction with and participation of the community and civil society members.

The main goal of EITI is to promote transparency and open dialogue about resource use for public benefit (Malden 2017, 2). Rustard et al. (2017, 153) categorised the goals of EITI into three groups: institutional, operational, and development goals. Their study finds that implementing EITI successfully met its institutional goals and some operational goals as a global framework, establishing transparency as an international norm and supporting an independent multistakeholder organisational structure at the national level. Although EITI falls short of achieving public engagement and participation, it promotes transparency by allowing corporations and Governments to report resource revenues and encouraging civil society participation.

Meanwhile, the EITI achieved successful outcomes in implementing its standards across continents. The Progress Report 2024 highlights that implementing countries have made significant progress and

improvements in transparency and stakeholder engagement. For example, Armenia increased disclosure of mining contracts and beneficial ownership, Ghana and Cameroon expanded public access to information about the extractive sector, Indonesia improved transparency of revenues and licenses, and the Philippines advanced civil society engagement and resource governance (EITI 2024, 10–11). However, the initiative faces limitations beyond those previously noted by Rustard et al. (2016) and Malden (2016). The EITI's scope and implementation are limited, mainly focusing on transparency and revenue disclosure by Governments and corporations. While transparency is vital for better resource management and Government accountability, it does not guarantee good environmental practices or protect the human rights of communities that benefit from their resources (Sequeira et al. 2016, 5). As the focus on corporate ESG performance grows, the EITI is expanding its requirements to include corporate accountability and social responsibility (EITI 2024).

2.3. *CLM and ESG monitoring*

Industrial activities, especially in the mining sector, cause destructive impacts on the cultures and livelihoods of indigenous communities (Oxfam 2025). Mining operations cause significant damage to the community ecosystem with extensive social and environmental effects, including pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and soil degradation, which lead to migration, urbanisation, and displacement of community members (Joseph 2025). Increasing concern over how to counter and mitigate such consequences and the need to assert community rights over resource extraction give rise to the concept of CLM to promote good ESG performance in extractive industries. In most cases, environmental trends and data on resource management are scarcely available to the policy makers. Danielsen et al. (2022) emphasise that policy formulation and decision-making based on environmental assessment through a top-down interventionist approach are often misguided or inadequate due to data scarcity or lack of information. It is usually difficult for policymakers to understand what is happening on the ground or whether environmental standards are being followed by corporations without a holistic and rigorous monitoring framework involving community members.

CLM is distinguished from other types of engagement or monitoring approaches from two main perspectives. First, it is described based on the idea underlying community engagement, involving empowering community members with the capacity to participate and influence decision-making. Second, the methods used in collecting data use indigenous knowledge, which, although distinct from scientific methods, may involve collaboration with scientists and researchers, utilizing technology and advanced equipment to monitor environmental

changes. For Reed et al. (2020), community monitoring is simply the participation of indigenous people in environmental resource management and governance. Community members, together with civil society and grassroots activists, observing, tracking, collecting data, and identifying environmental change and social consequences of the extractive industries (Reed et al. 2020). Community participation in decision-making through a democratic process encourages better environmental practices, good governance, and social well-being, giving indigenous people a voice in resource governance, upholding human rights, and promoting transparency and accountability (Danielsen et al. 2022, 640–42).

Beyond participation in monitoring processes, meaningful community engagement in extractive governance is increasingly linked to the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). FPIC requires that indigenous people and affected communities are provided with timely and accessible information and have the opportunity to participate in decisions concerning projects that may affect their lands, resources, cultures, and livelihoods (Yakovleva et al. 2023). Unlike consultation-based approaches, FPIC emphasises meaningful participation and consent as a basis for legitimate decision-making. In the context of extractive industries, FPIC provides an important normative framework for addressing power asymmetries between mining companies, Governments, and local communities (Ombella 2021). Integrating FPIC principles into CLM approaches can strengthen the ability of communities not only to observe and report environmental and social impacts but also to influence decisions throughout the mining lifecycle. The Inter American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) illustrates a similar principle in *Saramaka People v. Suriname* (2007), stating that land rights of indigenous people would be “meaningless” without recognising the right to natural resources. Similarly, a more recent judgment of the Kenyan court in *Save Lamu & 5 others v. National Environmental Management Authority and Amu Power Co. Ltd.*, upholding that indigenous community members have rights to participate in resources governance and are entitled to prior consultation (MacInnes et al. 2017).

From the initial stage, community involvement in monitoring environmental performance was limited to data collection on environmental phenomena that are affecting or influencing decision-making. As public awareness of the environmental impact of extractive industries grows, scientists and civil society advocate for greater participation of the community in the policy domain as an important stakeholder for addressing the impacts of resource extraction and promoting transparency and accountability of Government and corporations (Danielsen et al. 2022). The advent of technologies such as the internet and intensified training of local communities on scientific

methods stimulates improved data collection and reporting on the environmental performance of extractive industries (Khair et al. 2021, 6–8). Reed et al. (2020, 1279–82) noted that community monitoring has significance in mitigating negative impact and stimulating good environmental performance of extractive industries, including strengthening oversight and early discovery. Community monitoring has been successful in capturing temporal changes in environmental trends, thereby supplementing the failure of the top-down interventionist approach that fails to integrate indigenous knowledge in environmental policy (Buckland-Nicks 2016).

Notably, unsanctioned, non-restrictive, and unchecked operation of extractive industries not only damages the environment but results in far-reaching social implications. For example, the increased attention on energy transition to tackle climate change depends extensively on natural resources, the extraction of which results in environmental harms while the economic benefits are often transferred abroad. However, the framework proved ineffective in the mining sector, considering the nature of the extraction and potential irreparable social and environmental damage that may result from their operation. Spiller et al. (2025, 2–5) illustrated that equitable and meaningful engagement, participation, and monitoring of local people can reduce environmental and financial risk associated with extraction. CLM of extractive industries from pre-exploration stage to post-extraction fosters access to real-time critical information and enhances transparency regarding social and environmental impacts of mining operations, while promoting ESG compliance and ensuring accountability (Yu et al. 2024).

2.4. Gaps and synergies between CLM and EITI

The potential synergies between CLM and the EITI emerge most clearly in relation to transparency, accountability, and participation. The EITI operates largely at the national level, producing structured disclosures of revenues, contracts, and fiscal arrangements. CLM operates at the project level, providing localised and detailed data on environmental and social impacts. When considered together, the two mechanisms can generate a more comprehensive picture of mining sector governance. Community-generated evidence can make EITI disclosures meaningful at the local level, while EITI's reporting framework can provide national and international visibility that amplifies community findings. Both approaches reflect a rights-based commitment to access to information and participation in governance. The EITI's multi-stakeholder groups offer institutional forums where communities can escalate concerns, while community monitoring provides bottom-up data that validates or challenges official disclosures.

While existing scholarship has examined EITI and community monitoring as separate accountability mechanisms, limited attention has been given to the institutional pathways through which community-generated evidence can be incorporated into formal extractive governance frameworks. This study contributes to the literature by developing a conceptual model for integrating CLM into EITI processes, demonstrating how local-level evidence can strengthen validation, stakeholder engagement, and accountability beyond disclosure-based transparency. The most fundamental limitation is the lack of enforcement power in both mechanisms. Community monitors often document violations, but their findings do not necessarily compel regulatory or judicial action. Similarly, the EITI is primarily a transparency mechanism that cannot directly sanction non-compliant companies or Governments. Another challenge is the mismatch of scale. EITI disclosures are produced at the national or sectoral level, while community concerns are highly localized. This limits the direct usefulness of EITI reports for communities facing immediate impacts from mining projects (Li et al. 2025). Civic space is also a major concern. Community activists frequently face intimidation, harassment, and even violence when challenging extractive industries. Although EITI formally guarantees civil society participation, it struggles to protect civic freedoms in countries with authoritarian tendencies or entrenched resource dependence. Finally, empirical studies raise concerns that EITI may contribute to reputational benefits without substantive change in corporate behaviour, creating a risk of greenwashing rather than genuine ESG compliance.

2.5. Identification of the research gap

Despite the growing recognition of CLM and the EITI as mechanisms to improve transparency and accountability in the mining sector, existing literature largely examines them in isolation. CLM generates detailed, project-level data on environmental and social impacts, while EITI provides national-level transparency on revenues and contracts. However, there is little analysis of how these mechanisms can interact to enforce ESG compliance effectively. Transparency alone does not ensure compliance, and community-generated data often lacks formal channels to influence regulatory or corporate behaviour. Consequently, a critical gap exists in understanding how the alignment of CLM and EITI can transform information disclosure into enforceable ESG accountability. This research addresses that gap by examining their combined role in enforcing ESG standards within a human rights-based legal framework, offering insights into bridging the divide between soft governance mechanisms and binding compliance obligations in the extractive industries.

3. Conceptual framework

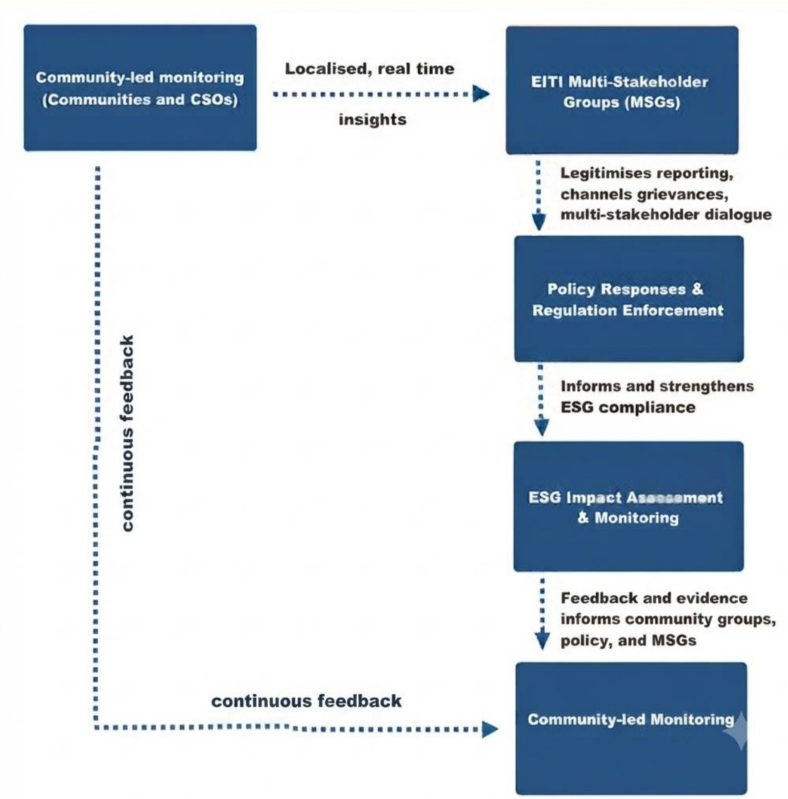


Diagram 1: Conceptual diagram describing the interaction pathways between community led monitoring and the EITI framework.

3.1. Explanation of transparency and accountability pathways

Transparency and accountability in extractive industries, especially in the mining industry are increasingly recognised as critical to ensuring responsible management of natural resources. Transparency is achieved through the systematic disclosure of contracts, payments, income, and ESG reports data from both companies and Governments. The EITI is a global benchmark in this area requiring participating countries to publish reliable industry data including production volumes and revenue streams (EITI 2025).

By making such information open and accessible, transparency initiatives reduce information inequality which previously often played into the hands of companies and create the basis for more equitable resource management. On the other hand, CLM initiatives and local reporting

mechanisms enhance transparency opportunities by bringing data related to specific mining sites to public discussion. These mechanisms make it possible not only to verify that companies have fulfilled their obligations, but also to identify environmental and social impacts that may not be present in official data. Transparent reporting at the field level facilitates constructive dialogue between companies and communities, allowing timely identification of complaints, risks, or gaps in compliance. Such a participatory process builds trust and ensures that the local impacts of mining are not lost in large-scale national or international reporting systems (EITI 2025).

Accountability is based on transparency, providing mechanisms through which disclosed information can be analysed and serve as a basis for action. EITI's national multi-stakeholder groups which bring together Government, company, and civil society representatives review published data, investigate inconsistencies, and propose necessary reforms (Siyobi 2021). At the community level, monitoring committees and civil society networks ensure control over both the fulfilment of corporate obligations and the activities of regulatory authorities, whether in the field of royalty revenue distribution, access to land, or environmental rehabilitation. Through such mechanisms, affected parties have the opportunity to demand compliance with promises and seek to correct violations. Effective implementation of these interrelated paths of transparency and accountability helps align extractive sector activities with international human rights standards, ESG criteria, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They reduce corruption, protect the livelihoods of local communities, and ensure that wealth from natural resources benefits both the local population and the national economy. It is important that such mechanisms shift resource management from closed decision-making structures to a more inclusive framework where power is shared with stakeholders. This approach strengthens trust between communities, companies, and the State and transforms the extractive sector from a source of conflict and inequality into a tool for long-term and equitable and sustainable development).

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1. CLM, transparency, and accountability

Extractive industries are often reluctant to disclose the full scope and impacts of mining operations posing a challenge to transparency and accountability efforts. However, CLM improves transparency and accountability in extractive sectors. The lack of transparency and accountability arises from the inefficiency of top-down monitoring systems (Danielsen et al. 2022). As discussed so far, the existing set of regulations is comprehensive but lacks implementation. Mining companies often bribe authorities and fund political activities, giving

them the power to underreport or hide environmental damage, revenue, mining agreements, and even obscure ownership details (Sequeira et al. 2016).

However, effective engagement of the community through the CLM framework strengthens transparency and accountability by building the capacity of local people and empowering them with the know-how and the tools required to monitor mining activities and track changes in the environment (Spiller et al. 2025). A concrete case reported by Pareja et al. (2019, 30) is that of Participatory Environmental Monitoring in Chilibre, Panama of the CEMEX Mining Company. The community members protested against the company for the noise and air pollution caused by their mining activities. The company was compelled to monitor and communicate results on air quality and vibration, and noise, and take appropriate measures, such as rescheduling blasting time to reduce the impact of noise (Pareja et al. 2019). While CLM has successful stories, it encounters numerous obstacles. Governments often lack the political will to safeguard the well-being of the community and guarantee genuine participation in resource management due to corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, insufficient capacity, and a strong desire for national economic growth. Communities are mostly disadvantaged by resource and capacity constraints to effect any meaningful change or oppose unsustainable extraction of resources. Community leaders are vulnerable to co-optation by corporations, pursuing personal interests at the expense of the public. Additionally, mining companies and corporations use strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) actions as a tactic to undermine, intimidate, or silence domestic activists and indigenous leaders. For example, the mining law of Indonesia that punishes any that oppose or obstruct the operations of the mining companies that have permits to legally operate in that country (Jong 2022).

Moldaliev (2021) shows that notwithstanding the challenges, CLM strengthens oversight over resource extraction. It creates an efficient communication network for community members, strengthening surveillance over mining operations, thereby improving revenue transparency. Communities observe, track, collect data, and report on social and environmental impacts caused by mining companies, such as land degradation, water contamination, and pollution, identifying local health risks, influencing Government responses through lobbying, protests, and petitions, and holding mining industries accountable for their social and environmental responsibilities (Moldaliev 2021). In Nepal, for instance, the Business and Human Rights Resource Center (2025) reported that more than 650 households filed complaints over the Nagdhunga Tunnel Construction Project funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which resulted in the collapse of the irrigation system and affected natural water sources, requesting JICA to seek a solution and provide remedies, including compensation for damages, providing

alternative water resource and employment for affected residents. In Kenya, a CLM group, Save Lamu, in collaboration with other civil society groups won a civil suit against the Kenyan National Environmental Management Agency for issuing a license to Amu Power to extract coal without proper community participation (Kenya Law 2019). As illustrated by Spiller et al. (2025), the CLM framework fosters both top-down and bottom-up accountability, with communities holding Governments and corporations accountable and the Government exercising effective oversight over extractive industries (Spiller et al. 2025). Combining or adopting a dual approach, integrating CLM and EITI, provides a potent framework that takes into existing power dynamics while empowering the community to actively participate in resource governance.

4.2. EITI reporting and power dynamics

EITI provides a comprehensive framework that aims to bring Governments, corporations, and civil society on an equal footing to promote the sustainable development of critical minerals, while also standardising reporting requirements and ensuring accountability. However, the success of such a multi-stakeholder approach has been limited (Institute for Human Rights and Business 2015). It has been demonstrated that although EITI is a promising framework, it fails to account for existing power dynamics that exist between, on the one hand, corporate and governmental stakeholders and, on the other hand, indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC-led groups), who often suffer the consequences of mineral extraction (Tang et al. 2025).

EITI rightly points out that there is an increasing need to mobilise indigenous peoples and communities living around mining areas so they can benefit from their abundant mineral resources, should they choose to do so. Despite the intention to create an inclusive environment, research demonstrated that Governments and corporations command great power and influence at the board level within the EITI framework, while representatives of indigenous communities are mostly disadvantaged. This grants influential actors not just a seat at the table, but significant authority to shape the rules of the game (Tang et al. 2025). The EITI relies heavily on the willingness of countries to access and provide data and on the openness of companies to support such an approach, which is not always the case, given that the overall sector is among the most involved in foreign bribery cases (Transparency International 2025).

In Guyana, for instance, the Government has attempted to appoint its own convenor as the representative of the civil society in the MSG of the Guyana Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which was described as a violation of EITI rules requiring the sector to select its own representatives. Despite intervention from the EITI International Secretariat, the Government's persistent efforts highlight the fragility of formal guarantees of independence (Kaieteur News 2025). Moreover, In

Tajikistan, EITI's universal system and voluntary approach proved ineffective in less democratic countries due to weak fundamental challenges, such as weak State capacity and insufficient civil society engagement, which have led to repeated suspensions. Its membership has been described as playing a "window-dressing role" without solving challenges of sustainable resource management and development (Maxudova and Kaoru 2026).

While many Southern African Development Community countries have committed to promoting value addition to minerals prior to export, it is crucial to seize the current global demand and high prices for minerals essential to the energy transition. However, several concerns persist. First, questions remain about Africa's capacity to move up the value chain in green technologies. Second, there is a lack of transparency in agreements being signed with external powers such as the European Union and the United States. These deals often lack clarity on the economic benefits and specific initiatives beyond battery plants, while excluding civil society and host communities from the conversation. Third, Governments continue to repeat the mistake of sidelining communities in resource governance. Lastly, there appears to be little attention from both Governments and companies to the ESG impacts of mining activities (Ndubuisi et al. 2025).

It is shown that a framework based on the voluntary commitment of Government and corporation is vulnerable to the realities of power dynamics (Robinson 2023). Powerful nations and large corporations can bribe Government agents to forestall and undermine disclosures and accountability. The lack of trust and tension reveals realities of power dynamics and limits of EITI framework, calling for the need to mainstream and integrate CLM into resource governance.

4.3. Interaction of CLM and EITI to enhance ESG compliance

As discussed above, EITI has made significant improvements in corporate governance, particularly in corporate disclosure, such as in Armenia, Ghana, and Cameroon. As demonstrated in literature, EITI implementation improves transparency but does not guarantee any real accountability of corporations for environmental harms caused to the mining communities (Rustard et al. 2017; Dashwood et al. 2022). Many resource-rich and corrupt countries participate in the EITI initiative to attract foreign aid or investment by improving their international reputation without genuine commitment to accountability, and the EITI reports often lack detailed accounts of local realities (Rustard et al. 2017). For instance, East (2023) concludes that implementation of EITI fails to improve accountability in Zambia due to information deficiency and a power imbalance between mining companies and local communities.

Combining CLM with the EITI initiative guarantees good ESG performance of extractive industries through a comprehensive framework to promote

greater transparency and accountability. Active and direct community participation in resource management allows local people and civil society to monitor mining activities using indigenous tools and knowledge to gather information and track the social and environmental impacts of resource extraction, thereby improving transparency and accountability of companies and Governments (Reed et al. 2020). CLM also has limitations exacerbated by scientific knowledge gaps and Government corruption. This includes constraints concerning capacity, and inadequate access to information about the full impact of extractive activities (Reed et al. 2020). As Dashwood et al. (2022) highlight, the community's ability to hold entities accountable heavily depends on having access to actionable information about mining activities and the power to influence decision-making. Previous studies, as discussed, show that CLM successfully influenced Government and corporate policies in Panama, leading to a change in the extraction schedule (Pareja et al. 2019). A similar outcome was reported by the Business and Human Rights Resource Center (2025) in Nepal.

While the CLM framework and EITI initiative have limitations, they complement each other to facilitate ESG performance of extractive industries. On the one hand, the EITI framework obliged States and corporations to report and disclose resource revenue, payments, and beneficial interest in resource extraction, filling the information gap and allowing community members access to critical information about who to hold accountable. For instance, Dashwood et al. (2022) noted in Ghana that disclosure of royalty payments by mining companies to the district authority in the Ashanti region empowered the community members to demand greater transparency and accountability, requesting the Government to direct resources to community use. On the other hand, CLM provides ground-level and real-time data that support the enforcement of EITI standards by holding Governments and companies accountable. To ensure progress towards meeting EITI standards, Myanmar established numerous CLM bodies with a committee to monitor open-pit mining and report violations of mining laws and regulations and negotiate compensation for the violation of the rights of the affected community. For instance, violation of human rights was reported by the mining committee in Heinda and Bawapin mining areas regarding concession overlapping community land, the use of toxic chemicals in open-pit mines, and severe pollution, leading the Government to investigate and subsequently denied renewal of license to the company responsible (Van Der Broek 2019). Despite weaknesses in both CLM and EITI considered separately, their interaction enhances ESG accountability and oversight. CLM, through mechanisms such as protest and petition based on grassroots level data, enhances social and environmental accountability and influences decision making, while EITI implementation stimulates transparency through disclosure, thereby improving corporate governance. The integration of CLM with broader rights-based approaches, including FPIC, can further strengthen accountability by ensuring that communities are not merely

sources of monitoring data but active participants in decisions affecting their rights and resources (Ombella 2021). Consequently, aligning CLM and EITI as a dual but complementary framework provides a best practice to ensure ESG compliance through transparency and accountability.

4.4. Institutional pathways for integrating CLM into EITI processes

Having examined the complementary nature and pitfalls of CLM and EITI, the study will now explore pathways to integrating the framework. The first pathway is to give formal recognition to communities as producers of knowledge for resource governance. Conventional extractive governance often relies on technical assessments produced by companies, consultants, or State agencies, while community observations are treated as anecdotal or informal (Iqbal et al. 2026). However, research on participatory environmental monitoring demonstrates that local communities can generate reliable and context-specific information, particularly regarding environmental changes, livelihood impacts, and ecosystem degradation (Rickard and Oliveira 2018). Under this framework, CLM would function as an early-warning and evidence-generation mechanism within extractive governance. Community monitoring data could include water quality observations, biodiversity changes, rehabilitation failures, social impacts, and compliance with community agreements (Damonte et al. 2026). The originality of this pathway lies not simply in recognising community participation, but in recognising community-generated data as a legitimate input into formal accountability systems.

The second pathway concerns the institutional location of community evidence within EITI governance structures, particularly the MSG. The MSG is the central institution responsible for overseeing EITI implementation and includes representatives from Government, companies, and civil society (EITI 2022). However, existing literature has raised concerns that MSG participation does not always cater for power dynamics because technically and politically powerful actors may dominate decision-making processes (Mubita et al. 2017). Integrating CLM into MSG processes would require moving beyond general civil society participation towards structured representation of affected communities and community monitoring organisations. This could include dedicated community seats within MSGs, recognition of community monitoring reports as agenda-setting documents, and requirements that MSG deliberations respond to documented community concerns (Wilson 2016). Such an approach would transform communities from consulted stakeholders into institutional participants in extractive governance.

The third pathway concerns EITI validation. Validation currently evaluates whether implementing countries have fulfilled EITI requirements, including disclosure obligations, stakeholder engagement, and governance outcomes (EITI 2025). However, validation largely assesses whether

transparency mechanisms exist rather than whether disclosed information reflects realities experienced by communities affected by extraction (Wilson et al. 2021). Incorporating community monitoring evidence into validation would allow EITI to assess not only procedural compliance but also practical outcomes. Community-generated reports could provide evidence regarding whether companies comply with environmental obligations, whether consultation processes are meaningful, and whether disclosed information corresponds with local realities (Kaonda and Neil 2026). This would require the EITI International Board and national MSGs to develop criteria for assessing the credibility, verification, and relevance of community-generated evidence (Kinda and Thiombiano 2023).

The fourth pathway connects community monitoring with corporate accountability mechanisms. Existing ESG frameworks increasingly require companies to establish grievance mechanisms, including under the UNGPs (United Nations Human Security Unit 2023). However, grievance mechanisms frequently fail where communities lack information, distrust corporate processes, or fear retaliation. CLM can strengthen these mechanisms by generating independent evidence that supports complaints, facilitates dialogue, and monitors whether agreed remedies are implemented (Harrison and Wielga 2023). Rather than replacing corporate grievance systems, CLM can provide an independent community-based verification mechanism capable of assessing whether corporate commitments are fulfilled (Harrison et al. 2024).

The final pathway concerns the conversion of transparency into enforceable accountability. Both EITI and CLM face limitations because neither mechanism independently possesses sanctioning authority (Murombo 2021). Disclosure without consequences risks becoming symbolic compliance, while community monitoring without institutional recognition may produce evidence without remedy. Therefore, CLM–EITI integration should create referral pathways linking community evidence to environmental regulators, human rights institutions, parliamentary oversight bodies, and judicial mechanisms (Farah and Junker 2022). Through these channels, information generated at the community level can trigger investigations, compliance actions, and remediation processes. This pathway addresses the central weakness of transparency initiatives which is the gap between knowing about harm and responding effectively to it.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This paper has argued that EITI has established itself as a global benchmark for transparency and disclosure in extractive governance, requiring the reporting of revenues, contracts, ownership, and environmental and social impacts. EITI has also fostered multi-stakeholder dialogue, offering civil society channels and mechanisms to oversee and report Government and

corporate practices. However, its voluntary nature means compliance is often motivated by reputational and investment incentives rather than genuine commitments to equitable governance, limiting its ability to move from disclosure to enforceable accountability and structural reform. As a result, EITI risks becoming a tool for reputational gains and greenwashing instead of ensuring real accountability and protection for affected communities. Despite its comprehensive framework, EITI has limited impact on addressing entrenched power imbalances between corporations, Governments, and IPLC-led groups. Without binding accountability and genuine community inclusion, EITI risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than promoting sustainable and just resource governance. In this context, CLM complements EITI by bringing local-level data on social and environmental impacts to national disclosure processes. Yet, the lack of enforcement power, fragile civic spaces, and risk faced by community actors severely undermine its effectiveness. Therefore, neither EITI nor CLM is capable of ensuring effective ESG accountability when operating in isolation.

Following from the above, these recommendations seek to strengthen the complementary operation of both EITI and CLM and address the gaps identified throughout this study. It is proposed firstly to create or invite different organisations with legal authority to independently monitor mining activities, ensure compliance with environmental and social standards, and openly share their findings with the public. By promoting transparency and encouraging active participation from citizens – especially from IPLC-led groups – this approach helps prevent powerful interests from taking control, while supporting accountability and sustainable practices.

Secondly, It is important to create local, multilingual and low-cost but efficient community complaint mechanisms, such as phone lines, apps, or in person safe spaces with clear pathways for investigation, remedy, and sanctions in order to ensure that affected communities can report concerns easily. This strengthens accountability and promotes timely and effective responses to human rights violations. To safeguard local voices and community monitors, it is proposed to establish and consider protocols that protect activists and community monitors. This must include physical protection, measures against intimidation, and secure channels for reporting human rights violations. Also, strong legal safeguards are essential to ensure that those defending rights and monitoring projects can operate without fear, reinforcing transparency and the rule of law.

It is recommended to implement formal channels for community monitoring data – such as reports, evidence, geolocation, and photos – to be validated and referenced in national EITI reports. Regional pilot programmes should enable multistakeholder groups to include community representatives with technical access and dedicated budgets.

This approach strengthens transparency, ensures that local knowledge informs national reporting, and promotes meaningful participation and oversight of mining and extractive activities. Lastly, extractive governance frameworks should incorporate FPIC principles and establish mechanisms that protect meaningful community participation.

6. Limitations and areas of further study

This study has three main limitations. First, as a desk-based qualitative study, it relies on existing literature and documentary sources and does not capture the lived experiences of communities, companies, and State actors directly involved in extractive governance. Future empirical research involving community-based fieldwork could provide deeper insights into the practical realities of CLM implementation.

Second, due to the global nature of the collaborative authorship, the study adopts a broad comparative approach across different extractive contexts, which limits its ability to account fully for country-specific legal, political, and socio-economic factors. Further research focusing on specific jurisdictions or mining projects could examine how EITI and CLM operate within particular governance environments.

Third, while the study examines transparency, accountability, and ESG compliance, it does not extensively explore the role of binding legal mechanisms and remedies for corporate violations. Future studies could investigate how community-generated evidence and EITI disclosures can be integrated into regulatory, judicial, and grievance mechanisms to strengthen enforceable accountability.

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