



GRRMC

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POLICY BRIEF

GALAMSEY FIGHT: THE BUCK STOPS WITH LANDOWNERS.

Targeting land access enablers is
the first and decisive step to end
illegal mining in Ghana.



PROTECT
OUR LAND



SECURE OUR
COMMUNITIES



ENFORCE WHAT
THE LAW SAYS



BUILD A
PROSPEROUS
FUTURE



FOCUS THE STATE INTERVENTION
ON **LAND ACCESS**, NOT THE LABOUR.

**NO LAND
ACCESS.
NO
GALAMSEY.**



AUGUST
2026

THE POLICY IDEA IN ONE PICTURE



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WHY THIS MATTERS

All the downstream incentives can exist in theory, but they become an illegal mining operation only after access to a physical site is secured. That makes land access the prevention choke point.

Executive Summary

Ghana's anti-galamsey strategy often intervenes after an illegal operation has already been enabled: excavators have arrived, fuel is being supplied, labour has been recruited and gold is being produced. This brief argues for a shift to the decision that comes before all of these - the decision that makes land available.

Hired labourers are repeatedly arrested while landowners and family heads who grant access are rarely the focus. The central proposition is simple: if land is not made available, the remaining actors cannot assemble at that location. This does not excuse other offenders; it identifies the strategic choke point.

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POLICY SHIFT

Move intelligence and enforcement upstream: identify the land, establish who controls it, verify who granted or facilitated access, and act on proven enablers - while still enforcing the law against financiers, equipment owners, gold buyers and labour where offences are established.

Why land access is the first enabling act



 LABOUR Workers are recruited because a pit/site exists.	 GOLD BUYER Needs output produced from an operating site.	 DAMAGE Excavation, river diversion and pollution require physical access.
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Article 257(6): land ownership is not mineral ownership

§	CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION Article 257(6) vests minerals in their natural state in, under or upon land, rivers, streams and watercourses in the President on behalf of, and in trust for, the people of Ghana.
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A customary, family or private land interest therefore does not give the landholder an independent right to authorize mineral extraction. Where evidence establishes knowing facilitation of unlicensed extraction, enforcement should address that conduct directly.

!	IMPORTANT SAFEGUARD Do not presume that every landowner whose land contains galamsey is guilty. Ownership, knowledge, control and facilitation must be established with evidence.
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Why labour-only enforcement becomes a revolving door



?	THE TEST If the operation can return to the same land after the raid, the state has disrupted activity - it has not dismantled the enabling architecture.
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Use the GH¢150 million NAIMOS allocation at the choke point

MAP	VERIFY	ACT
Every major hotspot to land/parcels	Who controls and grants access	On evidence against enablers

Ghana Resource Research & Media Consult recommends that a substantial, clearly defined component of the GH¢150 million 2026 NAIMOS allocation be used for a Land Access Intelligence and Accountability Programme.

1 Parcel & customary-land mapping	2 Repeat-site and access-provider intelligence
3 Integrated Lands / Minerals / Forestry / MMDA records	4 Evidence protocols for knowing facilitation
5 Referral for investigation and prosecution	6 Prevention metrics, not only raid statistics

The five questions every galamsey site should trigger

1	1 WHO owns or controls the land?
2	2 WHO granted or facilitated access?
3	3 WHO financed and equipped the operation?
4	4 WHO supplies or protects it?
5	5 WHO buys the output?

The harder policy question: why choose cocoa over galamsey?

Enforcement addresses unlawful conduct, but it does not remove the economic calculation facing landowners in gold-bearing areas. Land previously made available for cocoa can become attractive to illegal mining when a mining arrangement offers immediate cash far above years of agricultural returns.

GALAMSEY OFFER Immediate, visible cash; land value monetised quickly; strong incentive when gold prices are high.	COCOA / STEWARDSHIP Slower returns; labour and farm costs; value depends on productivity, infrastructure and long-term support.
↔	TWO-SIDED ANSWER Enforce against unlawful land access AND make lawful productive land use economically worthwhile.

Proposed innovation: Gold-Bearing Land Stewardship Dividend

+	WHAT IT IS A pilot, conditional payment for eligible landholders in high-risk districts who keep designated land in verified lawful productive or conservation use - such as cocoa, agroforestry, food production, river protection or forest protection.
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The purpose is not to pay people merely to obey the law. It is to pay for measurable public-benefit stewardship and to correct a distorted incentive in which illegal mining can create a large immediate private return while lawful agriculture and conservation produce slower returns.

✓	DESIGN RULE Pay for stewardship outcomes, not merely for ownership. Withdraw eligibility where knowing facilitation of illegal mining is established and
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prosecute.

Cocoa-Land Retention Package

 Replant & rehabilitate Raise future farm productivity	 Labour support Help cocoa compete for workers	 Mechanisation Reduce drudgery and costs
 Farm-to-market roads Improve access and margins	 Housing & asset finance Make farming visibly wealth-building	 Local value addition Keep more value in producing areas

Six-step land-first enforcement model



IDENTIFY — Map active and recurring sites to the land on which they operate.

VERIFY — Establish ownership, control, knowledge and who granted or facilitated access.

TRACE — Follow financiers, equipment, fuel, buyers and protection where evidence supports it.

INTERVENE — Apply lawful criminal, administrative and land-management measures against proven offenders.

PREVENT — Enhance monitoring of repeat parcels and enabling networks.

REWARD — Make lawful land stewardship economically visible and measurable.

Measure prevention, not only arrests

LAND LINKED % of major sites tied to verified land interests	ACCESS CASES Proven enabling cases investigated	PREVENTED Operations stopped before mobilisation
NO REOPENING Repeat sites kept closed	COCOA RETAINED Hectares kept in lawful productive use	VALUE FOR MONEY Prevention cost vs reclamation & damage

Policy message to decision makers

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THE CHOKE POINT IS LAND

The investor needs a place to deploy. The excavator needs a place to operate. The labourer needs a place to work. The fuel supplier needs a place where fuel will be consumed. The gold buyer needs a place where gold will be produced. Environmental destruction needs a place to occur.

That place is land.

NO LAND ACCESS. NO GALAMSEY.

Accountability for unlawful land access + credible returns for lawful land stewardship.

Source & Policy Basis

Primary analytical source: Ghana Resource Research & Media Consult analysis

Constitutional basis: Article 257(6) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

Budget reference: 2026 national budget allocation of GH¢150 million to NAIMOS for activities against illegal mining and forest degradation.

Policy development and publication: Ghana Resource Research & Media Consult - www.grrmc.galamseydata.com