



REPORT ●

Access to Climate and Environmental Information:

Challenges for Journalists in Six African Countries

International Press Institute (IPI)

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About this Report

This IPI report examines journalists' access to climate and environmental information in Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, and South Africa.

The six countries differ in their legal systems, politics, and environmental pressures. All have active climate and environmental journalism, serious environmental challenges, and reporters covering powerful political and commercial interests. IPI's [global research](#) shows that reporting on natural resources, extraction, land, conservation, pollution, and environmental harm can carry significant risks.

The report compares the information journalists should be able to obtain with what they can access and use in practice. It examines general access to information (ATI) frameworks alongside environmental, climate, and sector-specific disclosure rules.

The findings draw mainly on laws, court decisions, official platforms, oversight findings, and reporting by media and civil society organisations. Confidential interviews with journalists provide additional evidence. The main regional standards used in this report are the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) [Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa](#) (2019 Declaration) and its [Model Law on Access to Information for Africa](#) (Model Law). [ACHPR Resolution 657 \(LXXXVI\) 2026 on Access to Information and the Right to a Healthy Environment](#) (Resolution 657) provides the environmental benchmark.

Findings reflect information available as of August 2026. The study did not systematically test ATI requests or assess every institution. Evidence varied by country.

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● About International Press Institute (IPI)

Founded in 1950, IPI is a global network of editors, media executives, and journalists committed to quality, independent journalism. Together, we promote the conditions that allow journalism to serve the public, especially the ability of media to operate without interference or fear of retaliation. Our mission is to defend media freedom and the free flow of news wherever they are threatened.

IPI's Climate and Environmental Journalism in Africa programme, supported by Global Affairs Canada, works to strengthen and protect climate and environmental journalism across sub-Saharan Africa. It builds on IPI's wider work on press freedom and journalist safety and supports journalists and media working on climate and environmental issues through research, advocacy, capacity building, and practical support.

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1. Introduction

Across Africa, climate change and environmental degradation are harming public health, livelihoods, land, water, and natural resources. Decisions about extraction, agriculture, infrastructure, climate policy, and climate finance can shape communities and ecosystems for years. Independent journalism helps the public understand those decisions, see who benefits and who bears the costs, and assess whether governments and companies are meeting their obligations.

For this report, climate and environmental journalism means public-interest reporting on topics including pollution, natural-resource extraction, land use, biodiversity, and climate adaptation. It also examines how institutions and businesses contribute to or respond to climate change and environmental harm, and how communities and ecosystems are affected. This reflects [IPI's focus](#) on harmful business activity, government action and inaction, and climate disinformation.

The report takes a broad view of climate and environmental information by covering environmental conditions and risks, climate policy and finance, natural-resource governance, government decisions and enforcement, and company conduct. Where the report discusses records tied to a specific activity, concession, operation, or facility, it considers the full lifecycle, from assessment and approval through compliance, remediation, and closure.

● Defining access to information

Access to information means being able to obtain recorded information held by public bodies and, in some cases, private bodies. Company records may be requested from a regulator or directly from a company that must disclose them.

Climate and environmental information includes scientific data, decisions, permits, contracts, ownership, public spending, and company conduct needed to understand risks and responsibility.

Proactive disclosure means publishing information without waiting for a request. A public-interest override requires disclosure when the public benefit outweighs the reason for secrecy.

Access to information (ATI) is central to climate and environmental journalism. Official statements alone rarely provide enough evidence to determine what caused environmental harm, how authorities responded, or whether governments and companies met their obligations. Journalists need access to assessments, permits, contracts, maps, climate data, monitoring results, and enforcement records to verify claims. These records must be available in time to inform public debate, enable meaningful participation, or support regulatory action. Information disclosed only after a decision has been made or harm has occurred may come too late to affect the outcome.

Legal rights do not guarantee access. Requests may go unanswered, records may be scattered or poorly managed, and broad exemptions may be used to withhold information. The report asks whether journalists can obtain information in time to scrutinise government and company conduct.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) [Resolution 657 \(LXXXVI\) 2026 on Access to Information and the Right to a Healthy Environment](#) (Resolution 657) is a central benchmark for this report. Adopted in March 2026, it applies established African ATI standards to climate and environmental information. It calls for proactive, usable disclosure and stronger protection for journalists and affected communities seeking information.

2. Key findings

The legal frameworks differ, but environmental journalists face many of the same barriers across the six countries. Even the strongest systems do not provide complete, timely, and usable information consistently, especially for records on particular operations, compliance, and enforcement.

- **Strong laws do not guarantee access.** South Africa and Ghana combine enforceable rights with independent oversight. Nigeria and Mozambique also have comprehensive ATI laws, while Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) rely on fragmented constitutional, environmental, and media provisions. Delay, non-response, and weak recordkeeping persist across all six.¹
- **Post-approval records are the clearest disclosure gap.** Assessments, consultation notices, permits, licences, and contracts may be available when an activity is proposed or approved. Monitoring, inspections, violations, penalties, and remediation are much harder to obtain and rarely linked to the original authorisation.
- **Useful disclosure remains fragmented.** South Africa's [Environmental Screening Tool](#), Nigeria's [Oil Spill Monitor](#), Mozambique's [biodiversity platform](#), Ghana's [meteorological publications](#), and the DRC's [extractive open-data platform](#) provide useful information. Cameroon also publishes climate and forestry records. These systems show that searchable disclosure is possible, but they rarely connect approvals with later monitoring and enforcement.
- **Request and review systems can be too slow.** General response periods are seven days in Nigeria, 14 in Ghana, 21 in Mozambique, and 30 in South Africa. Ghana and South Africa have independent oversight. Mozambique relies on administrative and judicial review, while Nigeria relies on the courts. Cameroon and the DRC lack comprehensive ATI laws with uniform deadlines or specialised review bodies. Even lawful deadlines can outlast a consultation or unfolding incident.²
- **Company-related information remains incomplete.** Regulators and sector platforms may disclose contracts, licences, ownership records, and impact assessments, but direct access to company-held records is much narrower. South Africa provides the broadest route. Elsewhere, a public licence or concession rarely creates a direct disclosure duty. The largest gap concerns pollution, compliance, violations, and remediation after approval.

¹ https://www.saflii.org/za/legis/consol_act/poatia2000366/; [https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24](https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24;); https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/71062/fr.html/details_2; <https://www.prc.cm/en/news/the-acts/laws>; <https://actualite.cd/2026/03/28/assemblee-nationale-la-proposition-de-loi-sur-lacces-linformation-et-la-transparence-de>

² https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf; <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24>; <https://mireme.gov.mz/documento/lei-no-34-2014-de-31-de-dezembro-lei-do-direito-a-informacao-decreto-n-o35-2015-d-e-31-de-dezembro-regulamento-e-manual-de-procedimentos/>; https://www.saflii.org/za/legis/consol_act/poatia2000366/; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389357060_The_Right_to_Access_of_Information_in_Cameroon_RAIC_Report_2024; <https://www.opinion-info.cd/politique/2026/04/08/assemblee-nationale-jacques-djoli-defend-sa-proposition-de-loi-sur-lacces>. Nigeria, sections 4, 6, and 20–25. Ghana, sections 23, 25, 31–39, and 65–75. South Africa, sections 25–26 and 74–78.

- **Published information is not always usable.** Records may be scattered across websites, buried in technical documents, or available only for physical inspection. Local-language disclosure is rare. In South Africa, [a court found](#) that notices issued without appropriate local-language communication did not support meaningful participation. These barriers fall hardest on journalists and communities outside capitals.
- **Weak disclosure forces journalists to fill gaps at personal risk.** When public authorities do not release essential records, journalists must piece together evidence from communities and civil society, leaked documents, satellite imagery, field reporting, and independent testing. This additional work is costly and may put thorough reporting beyond the reach of smaller newsrooms. Reliance on fieldwork, confidential sources, or leaked records can also expose journalists and their sources to retaliation. IPI has documented attacks, threats, detention, and legal harassment against climate and environmental journalists across sub-Saharan Africa, including in Ghana, Mozambique, and the DRC.³ Effective access to information therefore depends on both functioning disclosure systems and safeguards for journalists and their sources.

³ <https://ipi.media/report-africa-monitoring-of-climate-and-environmental-journalism/>; <https://ipi.media/publications/ipi-monitoring-report-resource-exploitation-land-management-remain-risky-beats-for-africas-journalists/>; <https://ipi.media/new-ipi-report-reveals-safety-crisis-faced-by-climate-and-environmental-journalists/>

3. Priority recommendations

The findings point to five priorities across the six countries:

1. **Build linked, accessible public records.** Publish searchable climate and environmental information that covers environmental conditions and risks, public decisions and spending, natural-resource governance, and relevant company conduct. For major regulated activities and facilities, connect approvals, ownership, and contracts with monitoring, enforcement, remediation, and closure.
2. **Ensure timely and inclusive access and effective review.** Set enforceable deadlines, expedite urgent requests, and empower independent bodies to order disclosure and remedy non-compliance. Make information accessible and usable by providing it in reusable, understandable, and locally accessible formats and languages.
3. **Strengthen proactive and company-related disclosure.** Require public authorities to proactively publish company-related records, including licences, concessions, company ownership and control, monitoring, compliance, and enforcement information. Major licensees, concession holders, and state-owned enterprises should also have clear disclosure duties. Any refusal should give a specific legal reason and explain why secrecy is justified despite the public interest in disclosure.
4. **Protect climate and environmental journalists and their sources.** Prevent, investigate, and prosecute attacks against journalists, sources, and communities, and protect them from retaliation and abusive litigation. Provide effective protection mechanisms, safeguard confidential journalistic sources, and adopt and effectively implement measures to protect whistleblowers who disclose wrongdoing in the public interest. Set clear and equal rules for safe access to affected areas and places where environmentally significant activities take place.
5. **Invest in implementation and accountability.** Regional bodies, donors, and civil society should monitor compliance, test access systems, and support records management, independent oversight, legal assistance, and public-interest reporting.

4. Standards for effective access to climate and environmental information

Access to climate and environmental information is both a right and a condition for exercising other rights. Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter) protects the right to receive information. Together with the Charter's protections for health, natural resources, and a satisfactory environment, it supports access to the information people need to understand risks, participate in decisions, and seek a remedy.⁴

The ACHPR made this connection clear in [*Social and Economic Rights Action Center and Center for Economic and Social Rights v. Nigeria \(SERAC v. Nigeria\)*](#), which concerned oil pollution in Ogoniland that harmed health and livelihoods amid failures to assess risks, disclose information, or involve affected communities. After finding violations of the rights to health, natural resources, and a satisfactory environment, the ACHPR called for impact assessments, independent oversight, disclosure of risks, meaningful community participation, and access for citizens and independent investigators. The decision confirms that information and participation are necessary for communities to protect these rights and seek a remedy.

The regional ATI framework is grounded in the ACHPR's [*Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa*](#) (2019 Declaration) and its [*Model Law on Access to Information for Africa*](#) (Model Law). Together, they establish a presumption of disclosure, simple and timely request procedures, narrow exemptions, disclosure in the public interest, and independent review. They also apply to certain private bodies, including those that perform public functions or hold information needed to exercise or protect a right.

Resolution 657 applies these standards specifically to climate and environmental information. It links the right to receive information under Article 9 of the African Charter with the right to a satisfactory environment under Article 24. It calls for proactive and accessible disclosure, protection for people seeking environmental information, and greater transparency about business activities that affect environmental rights.

⁴ <https://achprau.int/en/node/641>. Articles 9, 16, 21, and 24.

● What counts as climate and environmental information?

For this report, climate and environmental information includes records about the environment and natural resources, the activities that affect them, and the resulting risks to people and ecosystems. It covers scientific data, government decisions, company conduct, public finance, ownership, monitoring, enforcement, and remedies. It is not limited to records labelled “environmental” or held by an environment ministry.

This approach reflects the [State Reporting Guidelines and Principles on Articles 21 and 24 of the African Charter Relating to Extractive Industries, Human Rights and the Environment](#) (State Reporting Guidelines) and aligns with the broad definitions in the [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#) (Aarhus Convention) and the [Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (Escazú Agreement). Taken together, these instruments support the principle that information held by public bodies should generally be disclosed and may be withheld only when a legitimate, legally defined exception applies.

Environmental conditions and natural resources. Air and atmosphere, water, soil and land, biodiversity and ecosystems, climate, landscapes, and natural sites	Activities, policies, and decisions. Impact assessments, permits, licences, concessions, policies, plans, programmes, legislation, and consultations
Environmental pressures, risks, and impacts. Pollution, emissions and discharges, waste and hazardous substances, environmental and climate hazards, and actual or potential effects on the environment and health	Monitoring and enforcement. Monitoring data, compliance reports, inspections, violations, penalties, and remediation
Climate and natural-resource governance. Emissions data, adaptation plans, early warnings, contracts, ownership, public spending, and climate finance	Impacts on people and places. Health and safety, living conditions, land, water, livelihoods, displacement, cultural heritage, and built structures

Relevant records are often split among public agencies, state-owned enterprises, and private companies. Effective access depends on knowing where information is held and receiving enough detail to understand and use it.

Regional and international standards link environmental information with participation and remedies. The [Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources](#) also protects Indigenous knowledge from use without prior informed consent. The [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), the [Paris Agreement](#), the [United Nations Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment](#), and the [Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#) reinforce public access, participation, and effective remedies.

These standards also support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). [Target 16.10](#) calls for public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms. Targets 16.6 and 16.7 address transparent institutions and participatory decision-making. Timely, usable environmental information also supports climate action under [SDG 13](#), water management under [SDG 6](#), and marine and terrestrial ecosystems under [SDGs 14](#) and [15](#).

Landmark cases and decisions on environmental access to information

SERAC v. Nigeria, Communication No. 155/96 (2001). The African Commission found that oil pollution in Ogoniland violated rights to health, natural resources, and a satisfactory environment. It called for risk disclosure, community participation, impact assessments, and independent oversight.

Company Secretary of ArcelorMittal South Africa and Another v. Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (2014). South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal upheld access under the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) to a private company's environmental records, confirming that corporate transparency can protect environmental rights.

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and Another v. Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Others (2025). The Court set aside an environmental authorisation because public participation was inadequate, including failure to communicate information properly in isiZulu. Formal disclosure is not enough when language barriers block participation.

Evans Aziamor-Mensah v. Minerals Commission (Ghana Right to Information Commission). The Commission overturned a charge of about US\$1,000 for mineral-right information, reduced the electronic fee to GH¢1.90, and ordered disclosure within 14 days. It shows how independent review can correct excessive fees.

Human and Environmental Development Agenda Resource Centre gas-flaring disclosure case, Federal High Court of Nigeria, Suit No. FHC/L/CS/251/2021 (2025). After unanswered requests, the court ordered disclosure of the companies involved, gas volumes, and penalties due and paid. The order came in 2025, four years after proceedings began, showing both the value and limits of court enforcement.

5. Cross-country trends and gaps

The six countries start from different legal positions but face similar implementation failures. South Africa and Ghana combine enforceable access rights with independent oversight. Nigeria and Mozambique have comprehensive laws but no independent ATI oversight body. Cameroon and the DRC lack comprehensive ATI laws, uniform procedures, binding deadlines, and specialised review.⁵

Across all six countries, climate and environmental information is split among agencies, regulators, local authorities, state-owned enterprises, and companies. Assessments, consultation notices, permits, and contracts may be available at approval, while monitoring, inspections, breaches, penalties, and remediation are much harder to find.

Proactive disclosure is stronger for selected national and sectoral information. Examples include South Africa's [Environmental Screening Tool](#), Nigeria's [Oil Spill Monitor](#), Mozambique's [district forecasts](#), Ghana's [meteorological publications](#), Cameroon's [climate bulletins](#), and the DRC's [extractive open-data platform](#). These systems provide useful national or geographically specific information but do not consistently show how environmentally significant activities and facilities are monitored or whether requirements are enforced.

Journalists may need to approach several institutions to assemble the records needed for a single investigation.⁶

Regulators may publish contracts, licences, ownership records, and impact assessments, but a public licence or concession rarely creates a direct duty for a company to disclose records. This means that company-related information is incomplete. [South Africa offers the broadest route to private-body records](#). Across the six countries, the largest blind spot is whether companies meet environmental conditions after approval.

Formal availability does not ensure usability as records are often scattered, highly technical, available only for physical inspection, or rarely translated into local languages. Journalists therefore rely on contacts, communities, civil society, leaks, and their own investigations.

A related cross-country pattern concerns safety. The incidents documented in this report cluster around reporting on extraction, land use, pollution, and related company

⁵ <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24; Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000;>
https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf;
<https://cedimo.gov.mz/index.php/acesso-a-informacao/lei-de-direito-a-informacao>

⁶ [https://misa.org.mz/relatorio-do-misa-mocambique-e-parceiros-detecta-sonegacao-da-informacao/;](https://misa.org.mz/relatorio-do-misa-mocambique-e-parceiros-detecta-sonegacao-da-informacao/)
https://inforegulator.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/PAIA_2024-25_-_Final_Annual_Assessment_Report.docx.pdf;
<https://justice.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-ANNUAL-REPORT-ON-THE-IMPLEMENTATION-OF-THE-FREEDOM-OF-INFORMATION-7777.pdf;> <https://novam.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/EHASS202561224.pdf>

or regulatory failures. In Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the DRC, journalists seeking to reach affected areas, interview sources, or verify environmental harm have faced restricted access, threats, physical attacks, detention, interference with equipment or recordings, and legal harassment.⁷ The actors involved vary and include public authorities, security forces, companies, and other private actors. The evidence does not show that filing an ATI request generally triggers an attack. It does show that obtaining and verifying information about environmental harm and powerful interests can expose journalists and their sources to serious risks.

The country snapshots show how these shared problems take different forms. Cameroon and the DRC need comprehensive and enforceable ATI systems. Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, and South Africa need more consistent implementation and better integration of approval, monitoring, compliance, and enforcement records.

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<https://ipi.media/publications/ipi-monitoring-report-resource-exploitation-land-management-remain-risky-beats-for-africas-journalists/>;
<https://cpj.org/2024/10/mine-security-guards-attack-media-crew-covering-environmental-degradation-in-ghana/>;
<https://cpj.org/2026/06/mozambiques-estacio-valoi-faces-clear-intimidation-over-environmental-reporting/>;
<https://cpj.org/2026/05/drc-journalist-detained-since-january-another-in-hiding-after-mining-impact-report/>;
<https://mfwa.org/country-highlights/environmentalists-journalists-remain-endangered-in-nigeria/>;
<https://rsf.org/en/cameroonian-logging-firm-uses-multiple-lawsuits-harass-reporter>

6. Country snapshots

○ 6.1 South Africa

South Africa has a strong ATI framework, with constitutionally protected access to public- and private-body records, independent oversight, and well-developed national environmental-data platforms.⁸ Yet access to company-held records is conditional,⁹ the public-interest override is narrow, and disclosure remains fragmented across institutions and sectors. Journalists cannot reliably connect authorisation records with later information on operations, compliance, and closure.

South Africa's legal basis for access includes:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Constitution)** guarantees access to state-held information and to privately held information required to exercise or protect a right. It also protects media freedom, the right to an environment not harmful to health or well-being, fair administrative action, and judicial remedies.¹⁰
- **The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA)** gives effect to the constitutional right. State-held records require no justification, while company records must be required to exercise or protect a right. PAIA also contains a mandatory public-interest override, but it is narrowly triggered.¹¹
- The [National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998](#) requires transparent environmental decision-making and meaningful participation, while the [Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014](#) require disclosure during authorisation processes.
- The [Climate Change Act 22 of 2024](#) requires the government to notify the public and provide enough information for people to comment meaningfully on certain climate plans and decisions.

Implementation remains uneven. Public-body requests require no justification and must generally be answered within 30 days, with one extension of the same length.¹² Where PAIA provides an internal appeal, applicants must usually complete it before applying to the [Information Regulator](#) or a court. Complaints to the Regulator are free. PAIA has no expedited process for consultations, licensing decisions, or ongoing environmental harm.

⁸ <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/chapter-2-bill-rights>; https://www.saflii.org/za/legis/consol_act/poatia2000366/; <https://inforegulator.org.za/paia/>; https://www.dffe.gov.za/index.php/media/george_9thnggireport; <https://www.sanbi.org/biodiversity/building-knowledge/biodiversity-monitoring-assessment/national-biodiversity-assessment/>; <https://screening.environment.gov.za/>

⁹ https://www.saflii.org/za/legis/consol_act/poatia2000366/. Sections 50 and 70.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/chapter-2-bill-rights>; <https://www.gov.za/documents/promotion-administrative-justice-act>

¹¹ https://www.saflii.org/za/legis/consol_act/poatia2000366/. Sections 46 and 70.

¹² <https://inforegulator.org.za/paia/>; <https://inforegulator.org.za/paia-fees-structure-2/>. Sections 25–26.

The [Regulator's 2024/25 assessment](#) found low public-body compliance, continued non-cooperation, and recurring misinterpretation of the law.

National climate and biodiversity disclosure is comparatively strong, but records on specific approvals and operations remain fragmented.¹³ Technical, geographically dispersed information and [limited local-language communication](#) can further restrict meaningful access.

Journalists can obtain company-related environmental records from regulators, but access is often slow and fragmented. Direct PAIA requests to companies face a higher threshold because the record must be required to exercise or protect a right.¹⁴ A [2025 Access to Information Network submission](#) documented procedural failures, excessive redactions, and broad commercial-confidentiality claims. One example was an [Eskom-South32 pricing agreement](#) disclosed more fully only after the Information Regulator intervened. Repeated appeals and dispersed records remain significant barriers.¹⁵

Recommendation

South Africa should make environmental information easier to find, use, and obtain. Environmental, mining, and water authorities should coordinate searchable systems covering environmental conditions, regulatory decisions, and company compliance. For major regulated activities, those systems should connect assessments and licences with monitoring, inspections, enforcement, remediation, and closure. Records should include reusable data and plain-language, relevant local-language summaries. The Information Regulator should strengthen PAIA compliance, expedite time-sensitive environmental cases, and require specific reasons for redactions. Parliament should ease access to environmental information held by companies using public natural resources or operating under major public licences, including through a presumption of disclosure and a broader public-interest override.

¹³ https://www.dffe.gov.za/index.php/media/george_9thnggireport;
<https://www.sanbi.org/biodiversity/building-knowledge/biodiversity-monitoring-assessment/national-biodiversity-assessment/>; <https://screening.environment.gov.za/>

¹⁴ <https://infoeregulator.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/PAIA-Manual-MAY-2025-English-Further-Updated-FINAL-Signed.pdf>; <https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZASCA/2014/184.html>. Section 50.

¹⁵ <https://cer.org.za/paia/paia-request-to-the-dmre-for-records-in-respect-of-samancor-western-chrome-mines-sky-chrome-mining-pty-ltd>;
<https://cer.org.za/paia/appeal-to-the-department-of-environment-forestry-and-fisheries-regarding-greenhouse-gas-emission-documents>

○ 6.2 Mozambique

Mozambique protects ATI constitutionally and implements it through the [Right to Information Law \(Law No. 34/2014\)](#). The law covers public institutions and specified private entities, requires proactive publication of key environmental records, and provides administrative and judicial remedies. Broad exemptions, weak implementation, and fragmented disclosure across institutions and stages of decision-making continue to limit access.¹⁶ Private licence and concession holders are not automatically subject to direct ATI duties, and journalists cannot reliably follow major activities from authorisation through operation and closure.

Mozambique's legal basis for access includes:

- **The [Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, 2004 \(as amended\)](#) ([Constitution](#))** protects freedom of expression, press freedom, the right to information, and journalists' access to sources. It also recognizes the right to a balanced environment, access to courts, and popular action to protect environmental and public-health interests.
- **The [Right to Information Law \(Law No. 34/2014\)](#)** gives citizens access to public-interest information held by state institutions, municipalities, and certain private entities. It requires proactive publication of environmental assessments, inspections, audits, budgets, contracts, and decisions affecting rights.
- **The [Environment Law \(Law No. 20/97\)](#)** recognizes access to environmental-management information and links disclosure to rights, participation, and access to justice.
- **The [Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation \(Decree No. 54/2015\)](#) and the [General Directive for the Public Participation Process in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process \(Ministerial Diploma No. 130/2006\)](#)** require assessments, non-technical summaries, and consultation information to be provided to affected parties in an understandable and timely form.

Public-body requests need no justification and may be made orally, in writing, or by sign language. Authorities must respond within 21 days. Access is free apart from reproduction, authentication, or certification fees.¹⁷ Applicants may ask a higher authority within the government to review a refusal and may then go to the Administrative Court. Mozambique has no independent ATI oversight body, and both routes can be slow.¹⁸ [District forecasts](#) from the National Institute of Meteorology, the [Mozambique Biodiversity Information System](#), and the [Environmental Licensing](#)

¹⁶ <https://ictpolicyafrica.org/fr/document/rexpqqgad5i?raw=true>;
<https://misa.org.mz/relatorio-do-misa-mocambique-e-parceiros-detecta-sonnegacao-da-informacao/>;
<https://eiti.org/countries/mozambique>

¹⁷ <https://cedimo.gov.mz/index.php/acesso-a-informacao/lei-de-direito-a-informacao>;
<https://mireme.gov.mz/documento/lei-no-34-2014-de-31-de-dezembro-lei-do-direito-a-informacao-decreto-n-035-2015-d-e-31-de-dezembro-regulamento-e-manual-de-procedimentos/>. Law No. 34/2014, articles 10 and 15–18. Decree 35/2015.

¹⁸ <https://mireme.gov.mz/documento/lei-no-34-2014-de-31-de-dezembro-lei-do-direito-a-informacao-decreto-n-035-2015-d-e-31-de-dezembro-regulamento-e-manual-de-procedimentos/>;
<https://www.cedimo.gov.mz/index.php/noticias/89-10-anos-da-lei-do-direito-a-informacao-em-mocambique>;
<https://misa.org.mz/relatorio-do-misa-mocambique-e-parceiros-detecta-sonnegacao-da-informacao/>

[Management System](#) provide useful proactive disclosure. Environmental records remain fragmented and difficult to access locally, especially assessments and monitoring reports tied to specific activities.

Journalists face institutional non-cooperation and may have to inspect records on site, which makes timely local access difficult.¹⁹ Company-related information is available through regulators, sector registers, published extractive contracts, and Mozambique's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The ATI law also covers specified private entities performing public-interest activities or holding information relevant to fundamental rights. Direct company access remains conditional, however, and post-approval monitoring reports are often difficult to obtain.²⁰

A journalist interviewed for this report said requests are often ignored or met with vague security claims, which may expose an investigation. A June 2026 Forbidden Stories investigation described efforts to impose a media blackout in Cabo Delgado, non-cooperation by public and private institutions, and restrictions on reporting about communities affected by major gas projects.²¹ Environmental reporting can also bring intimidation and interference, as shown by the June 2026 [seizure of investigative journalist Estácio Valoi's equipment](#).

Recommendation

Mozambique should make its existing disclosure duties work in practice.

Authorities that license and regulate major natural-resource activities should maintain searchable records from approval through monitoring, enforcement, remediation, and closure. Key information should be available outside Maputo in accessible formats and relevant local languages. An independent ATI body should be able to order disclosure, enforce deadlines, and expedite requests involving participation, resettlement, or ongoing harm. Legal reform should narrow secrecy and commercial-confidentiality exemptions, add a general public-interest override, and clarify the duties of major licence and concession holders.

¹⁹ <https://forbiddenstories.org/in-mozambique-the-regime-imposes-a-blackout-on-journalists/>; <https://mireme.gov.mz/documento/lei-no-34-2014-de-31-de-dezembro-lei-do-direito-a-informacao-decreto-n-035-2015-d-e-31-de-dezembro-regulamento-e-manual-de-procedimentos/>; <https://eiti.org/board-decision/2023-29>

²⁰ <https://mireme.gov.mz/bck-contratos/>; <https://mireme.gov.mz/documento/lei-no-34-2014-de-31-de-dezembro-lei-do-direito-a-informacao-decreto-n-035-2015-d-e-31-de-dezembro-regulamento-e-manual-de-procedimentos/>; <https://eiti.org/board-decision/2023-29>

²¹ <https://forbiddenstories.org/in-mozambique-the-regime-imposes-a-blackout-on-journalists/>. Confidential interview with a Mozambique-based journalist, July 2026.

○ 6.3 Ghana

Ghana has a strong ATI framework, but detailed environmental disclosure remains fragmented. Journalists cannot reliably connect approvals with later monitoring, enforcement, and remediation.²²

Ghana's legal basis for access includes:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992 (Constitution)** guarantees the rights to information, expression, and press freedom and protects media independence. It requires the State and citizens to safeguard the environment but does not expressly establish an individual right to a healthy environment.²³
- The [Right to Information Act, 2019 \(Act 989 or RTI Act\)](https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24) allows any person to request information held or controlled by a public institution without giving a reason. It requires information officers, recordkeeping, and annual information manuals, and provides for partial disclosure and a public-interest override where records reveal illegality, abuse of authority, official neglect, or an imminent and serious threat to public health or safety.
- The [Environmental Protection Act, 2025 \(Act 1124\)](https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2025/1124) establishes the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and provides for environmental assessments, monitoring, inspections, audits, climate reporting, and environmental-performance disclosure. The [Environmental Protection \(Environmental Assessment\) Regulations, 2025 \(Legislative Instrument 2504\)](https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2025/2504) govern public notice, comments, and hearings.

Direct access to company-held information remains limited under the RTI Act, which covers private organisations that receive public resources or perform public functions. Broader coverage of “relevant private bodies” requires a legislative instrument, which was still outstanding in May 2026. An environmental permit, licence, or concession therefore does not by itself make a company subject to direct RTI requests, although company records held by regulators remain requestable.²⁴ The RTI Act provides for partial disclosure and a public-interest override, but sectoral confidentiality rules can still restrict access. The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703), for example, protects specified operational and geological records while a mineral right remains in force, unless the holder consents.²⁵

Ghana's request and review system is comparatively strong since written or electronic requests need no justification. Institutions must decide and notify applicants within 14 days, with a possible seven-day extension, and a 48-hour procedure where life or liberty is at risk.²⁶ Applicants may seek internal review and then apply to the independent Right

²² <https://eiti.org/countries/ghana>; <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24>; <https://www.client.epa.gov.gh/public/permits>

²³ <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/1992/constitution/eng%401996-12-31>; <https://judicial.gov.gh/index.php/fundamental-human-rights-and-freedom>

²⁴ <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24>; <https://www.myjoyonline.com/rti-commission-says-legislative-instrument-needed-to-expand-law-to-more-private-bodies/>. Sections 83–84.

²⁵ <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24>; <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2006/703/eng%402019-08-19>. Act 989, section 17. Act 703, sections 19–20.

²⁶ <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24>. Sections 18, 23, and 25.

to Information Commission (RTI Commission), or go directly to the Commission for time-bound requests. The Commission can inspect records, set aside refusals, reduce improper fees, order disclosure, and impose penalties, but the RTI Act sets no general deadline for its decisions.²⁷ Enforcement may still require litigation. In May 2026, the Commission said it had [filed more than 50 cases against institutions that ignored its directives](#).

Ghana provides useful but fragmented environmental information. The Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) publishes forecasts and climate bulletins, and its [Climate Atlas](#) offers geographically specific projections and downloadable data. The EPA maintains a searchable but incomplete [permits register](#). These platforms do not yet connect assessments and permits with post-approval compliance and enforcement records.

Two Ghanaian journalists interviewed for this report, both frequent users of the RTI Act, described it as a major gain for journalism and an important source of stories. They said, however, that institutions may ignore requests, interpret exemptions broadly, demand high fees, or provide voluminous hard-copy records that are costly and difficult to analyse.²⁸

The Fourth Estate's experience illustrates both the law's value and its limits. In 2021, the [RTI Commission ordered the Minerals Commission to release mining-licence data at reproduction cost](#) after the Minerals Commission demanded US\$1,000. The High Court upheld the order, but the Minerals Commission [filed an appeal](#). In 2024, the newsroom also [used RTI requests to investigate waivers and the legal basis for mining in forest reserves](#).

Cost remains a wider barrier. In June 2026, [GMet quoted GH¢10,400 for 10 years of rainfall and temperature records](#), citing the work required to retrieve, validate, and analyse the data. [The requester and RTI advocates disputed the charge](#).

One interviewee also described online attacks questioning journalists' motives and political independence after sensitive reporting. Field verification carries separate risks. Journalists investigating mining-related harm have been [detained and assaulted, with equipment seized and recordings deleted](#).

Recommendation

Ghana should move from request-driven access toward routine environmental disclosure. The [EPA](#) should lead a searchable system linking assessments and approvals with the full compliance record through closure. Data should be reusable, with plain-language and relevant local-language summaries. The government and RTI

²⁷ <https://rtic.gov.gh/>; <https://ghalii.org/akn/gh/act/2019/989/eng%402019-05-24>; <https://rtic.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Evans-Aziamor-Mensah-and-Minerals-Commission.pdf>. Sections 31–39 and 65–75.

²⁸ Interviews, August 2026

Commission should expedite time-sensitive review, strengthen the prompt enforcement of [Commission orders](#), and prevent fees from undermining public-interest access. The government should also adopt the [legislative instrument](#) needed to extend appropriate RTI duties to additional private bodies, including major natural-resource licence and concession holders.

○ 6.4 Nigeria

Nigeria has an enforceable ATI framework, but environmental disclosure remains fragmented. The [Freedom of Information Act, 2011 \(FOI Act\)](#), lacks a general public-interest override, directs institutions to withhold environmental-testing results, and does not automatically cover private licence or concession holders. Some information is published proactively, but journalists cannot reliably connect assessments and approvals with monitoring, enforcement, remediation, and closure.²⁹

Nigeria's legal basis for access includes:

- **The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) (Constitution)** protects the right to receive and impart information, recognizes the media's accountability role, and directs the State to protect the environment. It does not expressly guarantee access to government-held information or an individual right to a healthy environment, while the media-accountability and environmental provisions are generally non-justiciable.³⁰
- **The Freedom of Information Act, 2011 (FOI Act)** allows any person to request records from federal, state, and local public bodies and from private bodies that provide public services, perform public functions, or use public funds. In April 2025, the Supreme Court confirmed that the Act applies to state governments as well as federal institutions.³¹ The Act contains no general public-interest override for institutions. Section 15(2) directs them to withhold environmental-testing results, although a court may order disclosure where the public interest in access outweighs the interest served by refusal.³²
- The [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights \(Ratification and Enforcement\) Act \(African Charter Act\)](#) protects the right to receive information and a satisfactory environment. In [SERAC v. Nigeria](#), the ACHPR linked these rights to environmental assessment, disclosure of environmental and health risks, and meaningful participation.

²⁹ <https://ead.gov.ng/category/displays/>; <https://nosdra.oilspillmonitor.ng/>

³⁰ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_2023. Sections 20, 22, and 39.

³¹ https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf; <https://www.justice.gov.ng/freedom-of-information-portal/>;

<https://www.mediadefence.org/news/supreme-court-strengthens-nigerians-right-to-information/>

³² https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf. Sections 15(2), 15(4), and 25(c).

- The [Environmental Impact Assessment Act, 1992 \(EIA Act\)](#) requires public participation, disclosure of assessment reports and reasoned decisions, and a registry for each assessed project.
- The [Climate Change Act, 2021](#) requires climate-data access, consultation, and public-engagement planning.

Requests need no justification and must generally be answered within seven days, with one extension of up to seven days in specified cases. Fees are limited to duplication and transcription.³³ Poor records, inadequate FOI structures, bureaucracy, and institutional non-response routinely undermine those rules.³⁴ The FOI Act provides no information commissioner or administrative appeal, so applicants usually need High Court proceedings to challenge a refusal or silence. Litigation can take years. A gas-flaring disclosure case filed in 2021, for example, produced an order only in May 2025.³⁵

The [Federal Ministry of Environment](#) publishes environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports and public-display notices, while the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) [Oil Spill Monitor](#) provides searchable, downloadable spill data. The reviewed platforms do not link assessments and approvals with later monitoring, enforcement, and remediation. Company-generated records can be requested once a regulator holds them, but direct FOI requests reach only private bodies providing public services, performing public functions, or using public funds.³⁶

A Nigerian journalist interviewed for this report said reporters often turn to civil society partners, interviews, online research, and confidential sources when official records are difficult to obtain. The journalist said their newsroom cross-checks the information before publication.³⁷ A [2025 Colonist Report investigation](#) used NOSDRA data but encountered company non-response, blocked access to a reported spill site, and could not obtain supporting correspondence. [Journalists investigating illegal mining](#) have also faced threats, police seizure of devices, and deletion of material. Independent verification is therefore costly and risky, especially for smaller newsrooms.

The [Oil Spill Monitor](#) is comparatively accessible, but [EIA disclosure](#) remains tied to individual assessments, is technical, and is predominantly in English. [Public displays commonly run for 21 working days](#), with records sometimes available online and at local, state, and federal offices. Fragmented records and the lack of routine local-language or non-technical summaries still limit meaningful use by affected communities.

³³ https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf. Sections 1, 4, 6, and 8.

³⁴

<https://justice.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-ANNUAL-REPORT-ON-THE-IMPLEMENTATION-OF-THE-FREEDOM-OF-INFORMATION-7777.pdf>; <https://humangle.org/the-freedom-of-information-foi-act-in-nigeria/>; <https://investigatenigeria.com/foi-act-how-journalists-struggle-to-access-public-information-in-kwara/>

³⁵ https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf; https://www.climatecasechart.com/document/heda-resource-centre-v-nigerian-government-gas-flaring_773b. Sections 20–25.

³⁶ https://foia.justice.gov.ng/resources/downloader.php?filename=Freedom_Of_Information_Act.pdf. Sections 2 and 31.

³⁷ Interview, August 2026

Recommendation

Nigeria should publish environmental information routinely rather than leave journalists and communities to piece together records through repeated FOI requests. The Federal Ministry of Environment should lead a searchable system covering national and sectoral environmental data and, for major regulated activities, link assessments with compliance, enforcement, remediation, and closure. Nigeria should also create an independent FOI oversight body able to enforce deadlines, order disclosure, and resolve urgent disputes without lengthy High Court proceedings. Legal reform should narrow the environmental-testing exemption and apply a clear public-interest override where disclosure could expose pollution, public-health risks, or regulatory failure.

○ 6.5 Cameroon

Cameroon has constitutional, media, and environmental rules that support access to some information, but no comprehensive ATI law. As of September 2026, civil society and the Ministry of Communication had developed draft legislation, but it had not been enacted.³⁸ Disclosure is also poorly coordinated, so journalists cannot reliably obtain or connect assessments, permits, licences, compliance records, extractive contracts, and information on company ownership and control.³⁹

Cameroon's legal basis for ATI consists of:

- The [Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 1972 \(as amended\) \(Constitution\)](#) protects freedom of communication, expression, and the press and recognizes the right to a healthy environment, but not a general right to information.
- **Article 49 of [Law No. 90/052 of December 19, 1990, on Freedom of Social Communication \(Freedom of Social Communication Law\)](#)** provides journalists with free access to administrative documents unless another law or regulation restricts disclosure.
- **Law No. 96/12 of August 5, 1996, on the Framework Law on Environmental Management (Environmental Framework Law)** recognizes the right to information about activities harmful to health or the environment, links access to consultation and public participation, and requires public authorities to collect and disseminate environmental information. It also imposes limited information duties on some private actors, but does not create a general right to request company-held records.⁴⁰

³⁸ https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/71062/fr.html/details_2; <https://www.prc.cm/en/news/the-acts/laws>

³⁹ <https://api.eiti.org/board-decision/2024-17>; <https://minfof.gov.cm/en/liste-titres-valides.php>; <https://minepded.gov.cm/category/fr/services-fr/evaluation-environnementale/etude-dimpact/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/5800>. Articles 7, 9, 10, and 15–17.

- **Decree No. 2013/0171/PM of February 14, 2013, establishing procedures for environmental and social impact assessments (EIA Decree)** provides for disclosure and participation during environmental and social impact assessments through consultations and public hearings.⁴¹

Implementation remains uneven, with no standard request procedure or response deadline. Environmental information is dispersed across the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development ([MINEPDED](#)), Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife ([MINFOF](#)), the National Observatory on Climate Change ([ONACC](#)), and sectoral bodies. ONACC publishes current French- and English-language climate bulletins, while MINFOF and MINEPDED provide some forestry and environmental-assessment records. Much of the information is fragmented, available only as static documents, or outdated. No integrated system links approvals with later compliance and enforcement.

Institutions are not generally required to appoint information officers, acknowledge or transfer requests, or respond within a fixed period. Cameroon also lacks an independent ATI appeals body. A refusal may be challenged through general administrative procedures, usually after seeking reconsideration. This is not an ATI-specific remedy, and three months of administrative silence may precede judicial review.⁴²

Company-related information is available mainly through regulators, environmental-assessment procedures, sector registries, and Cameroon's EITI process.⁴³ Environmental law and the EIA process disclose some information about company activities and related consultations. Cameroon has no general ATI law, however, requiring regulators to release company submissions consistently or companies, contractors, and concession holders to answer journalists directly. The country's [2024 EITI validation](#) called for further disclosure of contracts and licences, company ownership and control, and social and environmental payments. Disclosure of company ownership and control improved through [EITI reporting in 2025](#), but public access remains incomplete.

A Cameroonian journalist interviewed for this report said the absence of a comprehensive ATI law leaves journalists without a clear formal process for requesting information. Government institutions often do not respond, so the journalist's newsroom relies on professional networks and public data platforms and uses scraping, analysis, and fact-checking to develop stories. Some contacts do not want to be identified as having provided information.⁴⁴ A [2023 forestry investigation](#) combined government records, permit and sanctions data, interviews, and field reporting after MINFOF declined to answer questions. Such investigations can also bring threats and costly legal

⁴¹

<https://minepded.gov.cm/2020/01/24/decret-n20130171pm-du-14-fevrier-2013-fixant-les-modalites-de-realisation-des-etudes-dimpact-environnemental-et-social/>. Article 23.

⁴²

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389357060_The_Right_to_Access_of_Information_in_Cameroon_RAIC_Report_2024;

<https://www.coursupreme.cm/publication/detail/textes-et-lois/loi-n%C2%B02006022-du-29-decembre-2006-fixant-l%E2%80%99organisation-et-le-fonctionnement-des-tribunaux-administratifs>

⁴³ <https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/5800>;

<https://minepded.gov.cm/2020/01/24/decret-n20130171pm-du-14-fevrier-2013-fixant-les-modalites-de-realisation-des-etudes-dimpact-environnemental-et-social/>; <https://eiti.org/countries/cameroon>

⁴⁴ Interview, August 2026

harassment, particularly when they examine forestry companies and regulatory failures.⁴⁵

Recommendation

Cameroon should adopt a comprehensive ATI law with clear procedures, binding deadlines, narrow exemptions, a public-interest override, and an independent body able to order timely disclosure.

MINEPDED should lead a coordinated system covering climate, forestry, environmental-assessment, and compliance information. For major regulated activities, it should link assessments and approvals with monitoring, enforcement, and remediation. Information should be bilingual, reusable, and accessible outside Yaoundé. The government should publish extractive contracts, licences, company ownership and control, and environmental compliance records, and ensure access to public-interest information about companies operating under public licences and concessions.

○ 6.6 Democratic Republic of the Congo

The DRC has laws protecting ATI, press freedom, and the right to a healthy environment, including a specific right to environmental information. It does not yet have a comprehensive access system.⁴⁶ Disclosure is strongest for climate reports, mining titles, and extractive contracts, but weak for monitoring and enforcement at specific sites. A proposed law on access to information and public-life transparency was declared admissible by the National Assembly in March 2026 and sent to committee, but it had not been enacted by September 2026. The DRC therefore still lacks a uniform request procedure, binding deadlines, a public-interest override, and independent oversight.⁴⁷

The DRC's legal basis for access includes:

⁴⁵

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/podcasts/menaces-sur-l-information/20260131-cameroun-madeleine-ngeunga-entre-enqu%C3%AAtes-et-s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9-des-journalistes>;

<https://rsf.org/en/cameroonian-logging-firm-uses-multiple-lawsuits-harass-reporter>

⁴⁶

<https://medd.gouv.cd/loi-n-11-009-du-09-juillet-2011-portant-principes-fondamentaux-relatifs-a-la-protection-de-lenvironnement/>; <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20Public/Constitution.2011.pdf>

⁴⁷

<https://acp.cd/nation/assemblee-nationale-trois-propositions-de-loi-declarees-recevables-et-renvoyees-en-commissions-pour-enrichissement/>;

<https://versvert-infos.com/2026/05/15/loi-sur-lacces-a-linformation-publique-en-rdc-coded-et-ses-partenaires-harmonisent-les-observations-de-la-societe-civile/>;

<https://www.tsieleka.com/2026/08/21/rdc-lunesco-soutient-le-plaidoyer-pour-une-loi-sur-lacces-a-linformation/>. The bill remained unenacted at the September 1, 2026, research cutoff.

- **The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2006 (as amended) (Constitution)** protects freedom of expression, the right to information, and press freedom, and guarantees the right to a healthy environment.⁴⁸
- **Law No. 11/009 of July 9, 2011, establishing the fundamental principles of environmental protection (Environmental Protection Law)** gives every person access to available, complete, and accurate environmental information. It requires national, provincial, and decentralised authorities to make information on the state of the environment available and links access to public participation.⁴⁹
- **Decree No. 14/019 of August 2, 2014, establishing operating rules for procedural mechanisms for environmental protection (Decree No. 14/019)** requires EIAs and public inquiries. It also requires consultation materials to be made available in affected areas and allows anyone to inspect impact assessments held by the Congolese Environment Agency (ACE).⁵⁰
- **Law No. 007/2002 of July 11, 2002, on the Mining Code, as amended by Law No. 18/001 of March 9, 2018 (Mining Code)** requires the Ministry of Mines to publish a summary of a mining applicant's environmental and social impact assessment, management plan, or resettlement plan within 15 days of receipt. The applicant must publish the same summary on its own website where it has one. The Mining Code also requires publication of mining contracts, annexes, and amendments and requires disclosure of who ultimately owns or controls mining companies.⁵¹
- **Ordinance-Law No. 23/009 of March 13, 2023, establishing procedures for the exercise of freedom of the press, information, and broadcasting by radio, television, the written press, or any other means of communication in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Press Ordinance-Law)** requires holders of public information to provide professional journalists with information of public interest, subject to state security, national defence, and professional secrecy restrictions.

Implementation is fragmented across ACE, the Mining Cadastre (CAMI), sector ministries, and provincial authorities. [CAMI](#) and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in the DRC ([EITI-DRC](#)) provide comparatively accessible data on mining titles, contracts, production, and extractive revenues, but no unified record links approvals with later monitoring and enforcement. Requests have no uniform procedure or general deadline. Exemptions are not consistently tied to a specific risk of harm or balanced against the public interest, and no independent ATI body provides rapid review.⁵² Monitoring and enforcement records for specific operations remain dispersed and poorly

⁴⁸ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20Public/Constitution.2011.pdf>. Articles 23, 24, and 53.

⁴⁹ <https://legalrdc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2011-07-09-LOI-N%C2%B011-009-DU-09-JUILLET-2011-PORTANT-PRIN-CIPES-FONDAMENTAUX-RELATIFS-A-LA-PROTECTION-DE-L%E2%80%99ENVIRONNEMENT.pdf>. Article 8.

⁵⁰ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/D.19.019.02.08.214.htm>. Articles 19, 38, and 55–60.

⁵¹ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20economique/Code%20Minier/Loi.18.001.09.03.2018.html>;

<https://www.a-mla.org/en/country/pdf/1054>. Articles 7 ter, 7 quater, and 42.

⁵² <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/JOS.16.07.2011.pdf>;

<https://droitnumerique.cd/code-du-numerique-congolais-rdc-pdf/livre-iii-titre-i/>;

<https://actualite.cd/2026/03/28/assemblee-nationale-la-proposition-de-loi-sur-lacces-linformation-et-la-transparence-de>

indexed, with some available only in person. Although EIA rules require multilingual summaries and locally accessible consultation materials, wider official disclosure remains largely in French and difficult to access outside major administrative centres.⁵³

Access also depends heavily on relationships. Officials may not respond or may lack authority to speak, leaving journalists reliant on communities, civil society, leaks, and external data.⁵⁴ One journalist interviewed for this report said authorities did not provide data needed to examine overlaps between community forests and mining rights. An international civil society organisation ultimately supplied it, and persistent requests prompted informal warnings. Mining and conflict reporting carry further risks, including restricted site access, surveillance, threats, and detention.⁵⁵

Company-related information is obtained mainly through regulators and sector-transparency systems. ACE-held EIAs are publicly consultable, while CAMI and EITI-DRC publish mining titles, contracts, production, revenues, and some company payments.⁵⁶ Mining law also requires the Ministry of Mines and applicants with a website to publish summaries of environmental and social assessments and related plans within 15 days of receipt.⁵⁷ There is no general enforceable right to obtain environmental records directly from private companies. The largest gap remains post-approval performance, especially monitoring, inspections, violations, sanctions, and remediation.⁵⁸

Recommendation

The DRC should turn its existing environmental information rights into a functioning access system. A comprehensive ATI law should set clear procedures, binding deadlines, narrow exemptions, and a public-interest override. It should also create an independent body able to order timely disclosure. ACE, CAMI, EITI-DRC, and sector ministries should link records so users can follow major developments from approval through monitoring, enforcement, remediation, and closure. Information should be searchable and locally accessible. Major licence and concession holders should disclose key compliance records directly, especially where their operations affect public resources, health, or environmental rights.

⁵³ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/D.19.019.02.08.214.htm>; <https://cami.cd/category/non-classe/>. Decree No. 14/019, articles 19, 38, and 55–60.

⁵⁴ <https://www.eventsrcd.com/rdc-ferha-ntumba-la-voix-engagee-du-journalisme-environnemental/>. Confidential interview with a DRC-based investigative journalist, July 2026.

⁵⁵ <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/blood-sweat-and-batteries>;

<https://cpi.org/2026/05/drc-journalist-detained-since-january-another-in-hiding-after-mining-impact-report/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/D.19.019.02.08.214.htm>;

<https://drclicences.cami.cd/fr/>; <https://www.itierdc.net/open-data/>; <https://eiti.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo>

⁵⁷ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20economique/Code%20Minier/Loi.18.001.09.03.2018.html>. Article 42.

⁵⁸ <https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/D.19.019.02.08.214.htm>. Articles 36–49.

7. Conclusion

Across the six countries, legal recognition is only a starting point. What matters is whether journalists and communities can obtain useful information in time to participate in decisions, scrutinise those in power, and reduce environmental harm. Every country shows a gap between formal rights and reliable access in practice.

The clearest shared gap appears after governments authorise environmentally significant activities, including mining, logging, infrastructure, and industrial operations. Assessments and consultation materials may be disclosed during the approval process, while later records on monitoring, compliance, enforcement, and remediation are much harder to find. Without these records, journalists cannot establish whether companies are meeting their obligations or regulators are responding to harm.

The research also shows that obtaining and verifying environmental information can carry personal risk. This is most evident when official disclosure fails and journalists must visit affected areas, interview communities, rely on confidential sources, or investigate the conduct of companies and regulators. Across several countries, IPI monitoring and interviews documented threats, assaults, detention, legal harassment, equipment seizure, and deletion of recordings in connection with this reporting.⁵⁹ Sources may also withhold their names because they fear retaliation. Effective access therefore requires both functioning disclosure systems and protection for journalists and their sources.

Existing platforms show that better disclosure is possible. South Africa's [Environmental Screening Tool](#), Nigeria's [Oil Spill Monitor](#), and the DRC's [extractive open-data platform](#) provide useful models of searchable, downloadable, or geographically specific disclosure, although their coverage and currency vary. The next step is to connect approvals, ownership, operations, and environmental performance over time. This requires sound records management, proactive publication, timely responses, effective remedies, accessible formats, and conditions in which journalists and sources can use information without fear of retaliation.

⁵⁹ <https://ipi.media/report-africa-monitoring-of-climate-and-environmental-journalism/>; <https://ipi.media/publications/ipi-monitoring-report-resource-exploitation-land-management-remain-risky-beats-for-africa-s-journalists/>; <https://ipi.media/new-ipi-report-reveals-safety-crisis-faced-by-climate-and-environmental-journalists/>

8. Recommendations

Climate and environmental journalists play an essential role in environmental protection, public accountability, and the public's right to know. Their reporting reveals risks, tests official and company claims, and shows whether laws and safeguards are being enforced. That work depends on timely, usable access to information. The same information helps communities participate before decisions are made, enables regulators and investors to assess compliance, and improves public decisions on water, land, health, climate finance, and natural-resource revenues. Better disclosure can help prevent harm, reduce disputes and enforcement costs, and build trust in public institutions.

8.1 National governments and public authorities

1. Make climate and environmental information accessible.

- **Proactive:** Make information available proactively, including before, during, and after environmental emergencies.
- **Coordinated:** Designate a lead authority to coordinate access to environmental information across government bodies, including environmental conditions and risks, public decisions and spending, natural-resource governance, regulatory action, and relevant company activities.
- **Coherent:** Link information about major projects, facilities, and activities, so people can easily follow the entire process connecting assessments, consultations, permits, contracts, and ownership information with monitoring, enforcement, remediation, and closure.
- **Comprehensive:** Provide downloadable data, plain-language summaries, and relevant local-language materials, including access outside national capitals.

2. Ensure expeditious and inexpensive responses to access to information requests.

- **Training:** Appoint and train information officers to ensure they respond within the deadline and promptly transfer misdirected requests to the relevant body.
- **Prioritisation:** Require expedite action on cases involving consultations, emergencies, or ongoing harm.
- **Accountability:** Ensure independent bodies are able to inspect records, order disclosure, reduce unreasonable fees, and provide timely remedies.

- **Transparency:** Require public bodies and review institutions to publish statistics on requests, response times, refusals, appeals, and compliance with disclosure orders.
3. **Do not withhold information without legally clear, narrow, and proportionate reasons.**
- Exemptions should be legal, legitimate and proportionate, and serve the public interest.
 - Public bodies should explain and justify exemptions, based on the specific harm that disclosure could cause and weighed against the public interest in its release. Where a record cannot be released in full, public bodies should release any part that can be safely disclosed.
 - Commercial confidentiality should never be a blanket reason for withholding information, especially where records may reveal pollution, health risks, corruption, regulatory failure, or misuse of public resources.
4. **Guarantee all state-owned and private companies respect human rights, including the right of access to information on climate and the environment**
- States should take steps to protect against human rights abuses by business enterprises that are owned or controlled by the State, or that receive substantial support and services from State agencies, including by requiring human rights due diligence.
 - Provide effective guidance to business enterprises on how to respect human rights and promote transparency, including requirements for proactive and timely disclosure.
 - Take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, publish and redress any human rights abuse committed by third parties, including private companies.
5. **Fulfill the obligation to protect climate and environmental journalists, their sources, and whistleblowers — key actors in promoting transparency and accountability on climate and environmental issues.**
- Prevent and investigate physical and online threats, harassment, surveillance, arbitrary detention, and other forms of retaliation.
 - Provide effective protection mechanisms, safeguard confidential journalistic sources, and adopt measures against abusive litigation.
 - Set clear and equal rules for access to affected areas and places where environmentally significant activities take place.

8.2 Regional and multilateral organisations

1. **Recognise the public-interest role of climate and environmental journalism.** The ACHPR, the African Union, regional economic communities, development institutions, and U.N. agencies should recognize that journalists' access to information is essential to the rights to a healthy environment, public participation, freedom of expression, and access to information. Climate and environmental journalism also contributes to the rights to health, water, foods, and to rights related to land and livelihoods.
2. **Integrate information access and journalist protection into global and regional climate and environmental processes and fora.** The protection of climate and environmental journalists and access to information should be integrated in the agendas of key international processes, such as the Conference of Parties (COP) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
3. **Strengthen protection for environmental journalists.** Regional and international bodies should call on states to protect, prevent, and investigate attacks, including physical and online threats, harassment, surveillance, and arbitrary detention. They should promote access to effective protection mechanisms, affected areas, and confidential source protection.
4. **Strengthen regional action against abusive litigation.** The ACHPR should carry forward the study on Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) required by [Resolution 667](#), with particular attention to climate and environmental reporting. States should investigate abusive litigation and ensure that journalists and other public watchdogs targeted by SLAPPs) can obtain legal assistance and an effective remedy.
5. **Make disclosure and participation conditions of international support.** Development banks and U.N. agencies should require timely public disclosure, meaningful participation, and protection from retaliation in the activities and programmes they finance or support. Information should cover decisions and risks throughout implementation, not only during initial approval.

To the African Union and the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR):

1. **Promote implementation of existing African commitments on access to environmental information.** The African Union should support Member States in implementing all commitments related to climate and environment, including the Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2032, the AU Data Policy Framework, the Continental Open

Data Strategy. It should also connect access to information and transparency on the environment with the implementation of the Agenda 2063.

2. **Ensure that the ACHPR Model Law review addresses evolving environmental information needs.** The ACHPR's review of the Model Law, initiated under [Resolution 639 on the Need to Undertake a Study on the Review of the Model Law on Access to Information for Africa](#), should consider the growing need for timely access to climate and environmental information. This should cover proactive disclosure, relevant information held by private bodies, information needs during environmental emergencies, and the information needed to participate in decisions and seek remedies.
3. **Treat data access as part of environmental information.** Building on [Resolution 620](#), the ACHPR should complete and adopt the [African Guidelines on Promoting and Harnessing Data Access as a Tool for Advancing Human Rights and Sustainable Development in the Digital Age](#). The Guidelines should make clear that journalists and the public increasingly depend on datasets, monitoring data, and other digital records to investigate environmental issues and participate in decisions. They should promote proactive disclosure in accessible, open, and reusable formats.
4. **Track and support national implementation.** The ACHPR should monitor implementation of Resolution 657 through state reporting, follow-up guidance, and engagement with national oversight bodies. The African Union and regional economic communities should help countries apply existing African standards on proactive disclosure, access to relevant private-body information, independent review, public participation, and protection from retaliation.

8.3 Private multinationals and national companies

All businesses have the responsibility to respect human rights, in accordance with the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Companies should therefore implement strong governance and oversight over how their policies and practices affect human rights across their global operations. This includes respecting the right of access to information and ensuring that the rights of journalists and other public watchdogs are protected.

1. **Commit to respecting access to information.** Publicly commit to respecting human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and access to information.
2. **Publish access to information policies.** Develop and publish clear operational-level policies setting out how access to information requests can be submitted. These should detail the internal process for receiving and responding to ATI requests, contact points, the specific grounds on which a request may be refused, and the options for appeal if it is denied.

3. **Refrain from retaliatory action against journalists.** Do not use SLAPPs or criminal prosecutions to silence journalists or other public watchdogs.
4. **Disclose information proactively.** Publish ownership and contract information, assessments and permits, monitoring and pollution data, incidents, compliance findings, and remediation measures throughout the lifecycle of operations. Information should be timely, searchable, and understandable to affected communities.
5. **Conduct human rights due diligence.** Carry out regular risk assessments to identify and mitigate adverse human rights impacts, and ensure access to remedy where harms occur. These assessments should include an evaluation of how commitments to freedom of expression and access to information are being met in practice.

8.4 Donors

1. **Recognise independent journalism as essential to effective and sustainable climate and environmental support.** Donors should invest in independent climate and environmental journalism as a contribution to transparency, accountability, public participation, and informed decision-making. This should include support for investigative journalism.
2. **Make transparency and protection key requirements of climate and environmental funding.** Donors supporting climate and environmental projects should require the projects to include policies and mechanisms for proactive and timely disclosure of relevant information and protection of journalists, who are at risk because they share information in the public interest.
3. **Invest in strong and sustainable environmental information systems.** Donors supporting public institutions in building information systems should strengthen sustainable national and local systems, independent oversight and public access to information, and avoid supporting short-term or stand-alone platforms.