

COMMUNITY MINING SCHEME; A LAUDABLE WAY TO SANITIZE SMALL- SCALE MINING

For several decades, Ghana has had to grapple with the wanton destruction of its environment, and river bodies, with past governments making one single answer to address that one single challenge the illegal activities in the small-scale mining sector.

River bodies like Ankobra, Pra, Densu and others have all suffered pollution due to the activities of illegal miners, who are told sometimes spill mercury and other harmful chemical substances into river bodies.

The continuous destruction of water bodies prior to the coming into office of President Nana Akufo-Addo's administration was a major source of health concern, as residents in mining areas mainly depend on the polluted water bodies for drinking, cooking and other activities.

The CMS was one of the many interventions introduced to fight illegal mining, with the introduction of the National Alternative Employment and Livelihood Programme for community members who were dependent on illegal mining, the procurement of speed boats to aid the fight against illegal mining, the establishment of a situational room to monitor and coordinate the activities of illegal mine remotely, the registration of all excavators and all imported earth moving equipment in order to have a tracking system and the passing out of over One Hundred river wardens in the regulation of small scale mining.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY MINING SCHEME?

The Scheme is aimed at encouraging effective local community participation in small scale mining.

It is a novel mining model introduced under the Government of President Nana Akufo-Addo, with the intention of vigorously addressing the underlying causes of illegal mining popularly known as galamsey.

Effectively, CMS combines among other things, small scale mining in accordance with the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) and the Tributer System in accordance with Regulations 493-506 of the Minerals and Mining Regulations, 2012 (L.I 2182).

The Scheme is Community-based in nature and its operation is in line with Sections 81-99 of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703).

The Community Mining Scheme is governed by a code of practice as stated in Regulations 475 and 515 of the Minerals and Mining (health, safety and technical) Regulations, 2012 (L.I. 2182).

To ensure that the operations of miners under the scheme conform to health and safety protocols as well as ensure the protection of water bodies and the environment, there are Community Mining Oversight Committees in each of the areas the scheme is in existence.

In the words of the former Savannah Regional Minister, Adam Salifu Briamah, who graced the launch of the Tinga Community Mining Scheme, 2020 the policy will bring about a system of controlled mining, and go a long way to prevent the destruction of the environment through galamsey.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Minerals Commission is responsible for the implementation of the Scheme.

The implementation of the scheme is supported by a number of governance measures including: I. A Community Mining Oversight Committee, ii. A code of practice, III. Support service providers, among others.

The Community Mining Oversight Committees has a number of responsibilities notably: I. Overseeing the administration of the designated or permitted area under the Scheme, ii. the registration of holders of small scale mining licenses within the designated areas or within areas permitted under the tributer system, iii. ensuring compliance with the relevant or applicable legislation and IV. ensuring that illegal mining activities do not occur within the community.

WHO QUALIFIES TO ENGAGE IN CMS?

Unlike other mining schemes in Ghana, Community Mining Scheme is strictly reserved for Ghanaians, with emphasis on host communities.

It is a highly innovative way of involving locals into mining activities legally within their communities.

The intention is to make the Community Members also benefit from natural resources on the lands with their respective locations and ensure sustainable livelihoods, and by so doing prevent gross destruction of the environment.

In the words of the Lands and Natural Resources Minister, Hon. Samuel A. Jinapor as provided for within small scale mining at the launch of this year's first CMS in Tokwae at the Ashanti Region, the scheme he said "is reserved for only Ghanaian citizens but with an emphasis on host communities."

Thus, the Ministry has since the inception of the scheme endeavoured to make sure that members of mining communities embrace the policy as a "Scheme that is of the people, by the people and for the people of the community."

Just like his predecessor, the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, has been relentless in pursuing the Community Mining Scheme agenda with emphasis on host communities throughout.

JOBS AND PRODUCTION VOLUME

Gold production from the SSM sector has been increasing steadily over the past five years and in 2018, it reached an all-time high of 2.13 million ounces (43% of national production) with this figure expected to rise in the coming years.

But despite the positive gains, there were some negative trends associated with the Small Scale Mining sector which the CMS exists to address.

The introduction of the Community Mining Scheme has not only come to address the destruction that illegal mining activities cause to River bodies and the environment, including the destruction of cocoa farms, but to also provide decent jobs for Ghanaians and boost economic activities, especially within host communities.

From the fifteen (15) legal Community Mining Schemes commissioned across the country from 98 mining concessions covering a land area of 2,174.94 acres, some 60,000 direct and 22,800 indirect jobs have been created through the policy.

This has led to the creation of 82,800 jobs in total to not only provide decent jobs for locals within mining communities but to also ensure an environmentally friendly means of mining which is contributing immensely to the economic growth of Ghana.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Residents within the beneficiary communities including traditional leaders and the miners have been full of praise for the Akufo-Addo Government for honouring its promise of introducing the Community Mining Scheme.

For them, it is the first time in the history of Ghana that a Government has taken the bold step to ensure the active involvement of locals or indigenes in the mining industry within their communities, thereby ensuring that they benefit from their natural resources endowment.

Government through the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, have been at the forefront of the implementation of the CMS.

WAYFORWARD

It is the determination of the Ministry to continue to inaugurate the CMS to provide the needed jobs for locals especially the teaming Ghanaians youth. It is therefore, significant for all especially stakeholders to embrace this new concept in a way to sanitize and regularize the small scale sector for all benefits and sundry.

CONCLUSION

The data available lays bare the fact that the Community Mining Scheme is the most responsible and sustainable small-scale mining method that should be embraced in Ghana.

Government has taken the lead and demonstrated willingness to create jobs with the CMC, the onus now lies on all Ghanaians to support the government by shying away from the destructive illegal mining and embracing CMS.

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