

Newsletter

Dealing with illegal mining in Ghana-hope for positive changes

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

My most recent newsletter which highlighted the plight of Ghana as a hub of illegal mining of precious minerals such as gold, bauxite, manganese etc was described by some of my cherished readers and supporters as most disturbing. This is indeed very true. The situation has been dire, unfortunate and most disturbing.

The good news in this newsletter is that the situation is being turned around and the Government, with the support of the very vibrant media and civil society has put in place new policies to halt the senseless devastation.

The processes of bringing about these turn around have not been easy. It has involved violent enforcement which has claimed lives both on the side of the law enforcement agencies as well as recalcitrant and desperate illegal miners who chose to disregard new Government directives and continue their trade with careless abandon. Army Captain Maxwell Mahama, a nephew of Ghana's former President John Dramani Mahama who was on detachment duties in a mining area was lynched to death by some illegal miners in the community of Denkyira Boase in the Central Region of Ghana last June. The community had reacted violently in this way to demonstrate their intransigence to the new Government directives.

Government of Ghana's policies and actions in curbing illegal mining

It is now generally acclaimed that the activities of illegal gold miners in several parts of Ghana's hinterlands have destroyed farmlands and are further causing havoc to the environment, land and water sources

Government, traditional authorities, civil society groups, and some concerned individuals have all expressed profound regret at the destructive force of "galamsey" (illegal mining) to the sources of food and water.

As a first step in regulating mining in Ghana, the Government organized a National Stakeholder's conference under the auspices of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Australian High Commission on July 19, 2017 at the University of Mines and Technology in Tarkwa. The Government of Ghana had come out with some strong words and sanctions;

Touching on the involvement of local influencers in the menace, the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources of Ghana, Mr. Amewu said "Anyone found behind the illegal mining activities would be brought to book in the interest of the country". "We are going all out to ensure that all culprits, including chiefs, religious leaders and political figures, are held in check to stop the practice. "It is a strong warning to any of these people who are in one way or another fuelling the practice to desist from it before they are caught in the web to face the consequential action,". Mr. Amewu underscored the need for all stakeholders, including the media, to collaborate and take up the fight against illegal mining, adding: "We are all at risk of suffering the consequences of the activities of illegal miners."

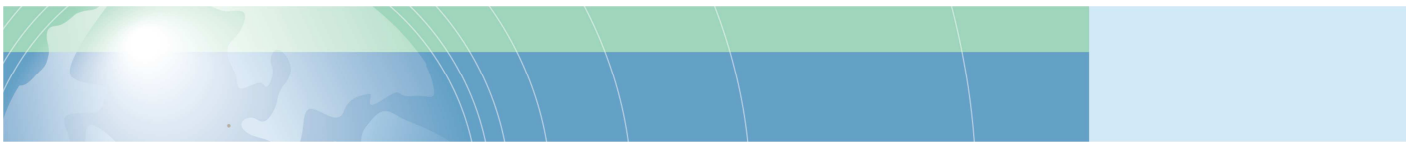


Photo above;

Enforcement has begun: five Chinese nationals and their Ghanaian colleagues were arrested in March of 2017 for engaging alluvial mining on the River Ankobra. They were not only polluting the river by washing mud into it, but were defecating into the same river that is a source of drinking water for the local people.

Photo below; Chinese illegal miners processed by Ghana's immigration for deportation





Government's anti-illegal mining task force, Operation Vanguard recently arrested some ninety three more illegal miners.

This brings the total number of arrested illegal miners to one hundred and eighty three. The miners were arrested in some illegal mining areas in the Ashanti, Eastern and Western Regions of Ghana.

All ninety arrested earlier have been arraigned before courts in various parts of the country.

The Public Relations Officer of Operation Vanguard, Major Gariba Pabi told Citi News those arrested will soon be prosecuted.

"As at this morning we have made 183 arrests in these three regions. All those arrested have been handed over to the Police in the various regions and they are taking them through prosecution process. What we do is that when we arrest illegal miners on the site, we hand them over to the Police and the Police take over from there."

Addressing defiant miners who operate in the night, Major Gariba Pabi said they have devised strategies to clamp down on them.

"We are 400 in three regions so we cannot be everywhere at a particular time. We are making do with the 400. Now we do limited operations. Most of the operations we do are during the day."

Operation Vanguard [a taskforce comprising a joint military and police of about 400 personnel] was sent to three regions – Ashanti, Eastern and Western, to flush out illegal miners in those areas.

The operation recorded a near setback a few weeks after the military personnel shot an illegal miner at Obuasi Anyimadukrom in the Ashanti Region.

The teams have been tasked to stay at their assigned regions until all forms of illegal mining, popularly known as galamsey, have been stopped and unauthorised mining pits permanently destroyed.

To make their work very efficient, the anti-galamsey task force that was trained at the Bundase Training Camp in the Ningo Prampram District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana was equipped and fully armed.

The task force was also supplied with new patrol vehicles and other logistics to enable its members perform their operations with urgency and speed.

The leadership of all religious communities in Ghana has spoken against illegal mining and has pledged their support for the efforts of the Government. The Methodist Church of Ghana has taken an extra step by preaching in the pulpits against illegal mining and pointing out on the ills of the practice and have cautioned their followers to eschew such greed and avarice that have led to the menace. The Church has used the opportunity to speak about opportunities for job creation such as in Beekeeping as promoted by UMCOR's Sustainable Agriculture and Development Program. The church has further elaborated on the very destructive consequences of illegal mining and the obvious destruction to the land and water bodies resulting in risks to food security and environmental degradation.



Photo above; The Ankobra River is one of the damaged rivers that have received restorative attention; It starts northeast of Wiawso in the Western Region of Ghana and, it flows about 190 kilometres (120 mi) south to the Gulf of Guinea, and its entire course is in south Ghana.



Progress made in curbing illegal mining

Mr. John Peter Amewu, the Minister of Lands and Forestry of Ghana has launched the Multilateral Mining Integrated Project (MMIP) to holistically tackle the issue of illegal mining and bring sanity in the sector.

The MMIP is built on a three-prong approach involving the provision of the law, enforcement of the law, and technology to ensure transparency and sustainable mining.

Under technology, there would be the application of the use of drone and tracking devices for monitoring of the mining sites to ensure that the miners undertook mining in a sustainable way. The MMIP, being rolled out in partnership with the Mineral Commission of Ghana, is a five-year project that seeks to involve all Ghanaian stakeholders in the mining sector, in an elaborate program aimed at sanitizing the sector.

Soon after the launch there was a declaration of a three-week ultimatum by the Ministry of Lands and Forestry in Ghana for all who were engaged in illegal mining to put a stop to their activities.

At the end of declaration on Saturday April 15, 2017 much result had been yielded with most of the miners abandoning their concessions and removing their equipment from the mining sites. The Minister, Mr. Amewu said visits to some mining concessions in the Western and Eastern Regions of Ghana revealed that over 100 excavators which had been taken away from the mining sites and indications were that over 200 excavators had been withdrawn from various sites all over the country.

There were extensive plans to reclaim abandoned and destroyed lands, while plans were also in place to restore the polluted water bodies. The Government of Ghana has plans under the MMIP, to provide alternative livelihoods involving the cultivation of oil palm plantations in areas where illegal mining had become the main source of employment of the community. Such places such as the Prestea Huni-Valley in the Western Region and in Dunkwa in the Central region considered as the hotbeds of illegal mining would be considered and all efforts will be made to provide such alternative livelihoods. Beekeeping is another very important source of livelihood and UMCOR will endeavor to support

Of particular interest is the role of the media. Many radio and Television stations in Ghana have supported Government efforts by spreading the news on the collective responsibility of all Ghanaians to engage in the education process and also to inform the illegal miners of the incentives of the MMIP. Churches and Non-Governmental Organizations have supported the cause to end illegal mining. The military and security services have embarked on massive deployment to sustain the enforcement and on the whole Ghana seems to be winning the war on illegal mining. The water bodies are being restored and hopefully lands will be available for food production to ensure a food-secure country. UMCOR's Sustainable Agriculture Program has reason to continue as hope for the communities.



Thank you & Keep praying for me

My family and I remain thankful to you and your congregations for your prayers and support. God willing, I will begin itineration in the US mid-October. The following is the tentative planned itineration schedule

October 11 - 12: Atlanta Office Visit
October 14 -15: Peninsula/Delaware Annual Conference
October 17-22: Minnesota Annual Conference
October 24-25; Virginia Annual Conference
Oct 27-Nov 12: North Carolina Annual Conference
November 14-15: Oklahoma Annual Conference
Nov 17- Dec 1: Rocky Mountain Annual Conference
Dec 3 – Dec 20: Cal-Pac Annual Conference;

I hope to meet as many friends as possible during the days scheduled for the visit to your respective churches

Please pray for my family. It has been a heartbreaking experience for us when my middle son, Toni was denied a visa to Canada for the Master's program in Actuarial Science. Friends who supported Toni have also been downhearted by this development. The University of Windsor has however deferred Toni's admission to September 2018 with a view that he could apply again for visa after addressing the reasons provided by the Canadian embassy for the visa denial. Selma turned 24 on June 11. Her graduation was held on Friday, July 21. She completed a course at the University of Ghana in Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology with a Second Upper Division. She intends to study Medicine from 2018 after one year of National Service. Selma is currently serving at the University of Health and Allied Sciences in Ho, Volta Region of Ghana. She may accompany me on itineration.

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