

**REGULARIZATION OF SMALL SCALE MINING, THE BOTTOM VIEW: A PAPER PRESENTED BY E.A. AZAMETI, PRESIDENT OF THE GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCALE GOLD MINERS DURING THE COMMUNITIES AND SMALL SCALE MINING (CASM) 3<sup>RD</sup> A. G. M AND LEARNING EVENT – ELMINA, GHANA, SEPT. 7 – 10, 2003**

Mr. Chairman, Honorable Ministers of State, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Miners, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government of Ghana has put in place a credible process whereby an artisanal Gold Miner could obtain a license to become a Regularized or small scale miner. The Minerals Commission of Ghana which is the Agency that oversees mining in Ghana has benefited from several World Bank Sponsored programmes to improve upon the methods of Small Scale Mining as it was realized that small scale miners wash about 30% of the gold they dip back into the soil because of the use of improper equipment.

I would like to take this opportunity Mr. Chairman on behalf of Small Scale Gold Miners, to register our profound gratitude to the World Bank for her continued support for Ghana Small Scale Miners. I am also extending our gratitude to the Minerals Commission and her partners involved in the quest to improve Small Scale Mining. One unique partner I would like to mention is the Geological Management and Consultancy Limited (GEOMAN CONSULT). They have involved themselves in the search for a more efficient methods of Small Scale Mining for quite a long time now, and we are thankful for that.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen a greater number of our youth miners belong to the group called Galarmsey. They are the illegal miners. They carry out their activities anywhere, anytime anyhow. They become destructive when the Authorities try to be too hard on them. My Association finds it really difficult to get most of these illegal miners to have their activities regularized.

Among the reasons they assign to their unwillingness to regularize are:

**THE PROCESS OF REGULARIZATION BEING TOO LONG**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, when a prospective miner identifies a mining potential, he is required to submit a site plan of the area to the District Small Scale Mining Officer. He is given an application form, which he fills and submits, to the District Assemble. The Assembly will put up a notice for twenty-one days. If nobody protests against the notice, the District Chief Executives recommends to the Mineral Commission District Officer to carry on the process of application.

Twelve copies of the map or plan of the area being applied for with reference to a topographical sheet are prepared.

The completed application for and the copies of the map/plan of the area are then sent to district centre i.e. District Officer.

The District Officer conducts Field Inspection to ascertain whether the area on the map conforms to that on the ground.

The Application form and a copy of the map is then forwarded to the District Chief Executive for approval.

The approved application form and ten (10) copies of the site plan are then forwarded to the Minerals Commission in Accra.

An Environmental Permit would also now have to be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency.

If approved, the Minister for Miners signs an Agreement between the applicant and the Government of Ghana. On the other hand, if not approved he notifies the applicant in writing through the Minerals Commission of his disapproval and no further action will be taken on the application.

The applicant takes the signed Agreement and a covering letter from Minerals Commission to the Chief Inspector of Mines to obtain Operating Permit before, commencement of any work on the land.

The applicant must make to the Minerals Commission for record purposes, a copy of the operating permit obtained from the Chief Inspector of Mines.

On receipt of the signed Agreement, the applicant is required to register it with the Registrar of Land.

The applicant now goes back to his village to wait for the arrival of the license. It takes about three months for the actual license to arrive.

From the time the prospective Miner reports to the District Assembly to the time the license arrives takes about six months. The prospective Miner, within the period, would have made several trips to Accra to check on the status of this application. In some areas the application forms remain at the District Assembly Office for years because some of the District Chief Executives do not cooperate effectively with the Mineral Commission District Officers. In instances like this, Mr. Chairman, the spirits and the enthusiasm of these Miners become dampened. The result is that most Small Scale Miners choose to become galamseers than having their activities regularized. In some instances, before the license comes, the Miners would have completed their mining activities, and the site, which was once exploding with human activities, becomes as dead as a cemetery.

### NEGATIVE PRESS REPORTING

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, when people appreciate what you are doing, you are encouraged to do it and do it well. One other factor that is not helping many Galamseers to regularize their activities is, Negative Press Reporting. Galamsey has suffered from a hostile press for far too long. Many Journalists embellish report about Galamsey to sell. The vocabularies that appeal to these Journalists most when they are writing about Galamsey activities are Illegal Mining, Pollution, Environmental Degradation, To some people even when flood waters change the colour of a river, it is galamsey. Even if a lorry gets stuck in the mud near a lorry road and drivers use shovels to dig to get it out, to these, it is galamsey. By this Mr. Chairmen, many decent people who have the capital to go into Small Scale Mining are rather scared away. Even Business and Mining Technology Graduates from Tertiary Institutions who should be encouraged to go into Small Scale Mining in order to broaden the private sector base and enhance employment opportunities are also scared away. There are many prominent people in our society who are also interested in Small Scale Mining, but because everything about it is reported negatively, they lack the courage to come out boldly to identify themselves with us. Thus, for Galamsey Miners to spend a lot of money to go through a long



process to be granted licenses to do what people look down upon, is a waste of time and resources, and they are not prepared for it. We would be really be, grateful, Mr. Chairman, if the media would always endeavour to promote the sector so as to encourage more people to enter it. Small Scale Mining, Ladies and Gentlemen, is not a degraded venture.

### UNFAVOURABLE GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman, one sad situation within the Mining sector is that, the whole land surface of the Nation has been partitioned among several Large Scale Mining Companies. Some of the companies are alive, some are asleep, and the rest are dead. Some Companies have acquired their concessions many years ago without working on them. This situation is no longer tenable. The Minerals Commission finds itself still holding in trust these concessions and continue to turn down Small Scale Miners applications at these areas.

It is really disheartening, Mr. Chairman, for a small scale miner to submit his site plan to the Minerals Commission to be told that his area affects another concession where in actual fact no body has been to the area to express interest in the land for the chief and his people to bear witness. In this instance the galamsey man is only being encouraged to go on to do his galamsey. The Minerals Commission has shaded -off some areas for small-scale miners, but because of the lack of geological information about these areas most Small Scale Miners are unwilling to regularize their activities there. A miner must always look before he leaps.

### LACK OF CAPITAL

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, you would agree with me that mining is capital intensive, but, there in no credit facility available to Small Scale Miners. Their Sources of finance are other gold dealers who deal with them on cash for gold basis. When Small Scale Miners begin their operations with financial assistance from these gold dealers and fail in their operations, they find it difficult to hold on, but instead they ran away, and become migrant Miners, Migrating from place to place to escape from their creditors' observation. Such miners would not think of having their activities regularized.

### CHIEFTAINCY

Mr. Chairman, <sup>Landowners</sup> who have mineral deposits in their stool lands have arrogated too much power and authority to themselves to the extent that they grant permission to the local youth miners to mine with impunity. When these Chief are confronted, they bang on chests to tell you that they own the land and that their children must survive. In situations like this, the miners would never want to have their activities regularized. They become hostile and lawless.

### CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, may I conclude with following suggested recommendations.

1. The process of regularization must be shortened in order to bring it into a closer proximity to Small Scale Miners by delegating the authority to do so to the Mineral Commission at the District Offices.
2. The Media houses must endeavour to remove the **NEGATIVE TAG** that they have put on Small Scale Mining in general.
3. The Minerals Commission must endeavour to cause to be published in the National Dailies, all Mining companies in Good Standing and those whose Reconnaissance Licenses have expired.
4. Government must expedite action on the granting of Mining Lease to avoid undue delay giving galamseys the chance to encroach upon other people's properties.
5. Small Scale Miners should be included in the Poverty Alleviation Fund.
6. We are appealing to the World Bank to set up a plant pool comprising of an Excavator, a Dozer, Payloader, a Dumper, and a Low Loader must be created for the Association. We can hire out these equipment to Miners and pay for the costs. This will help us to enforced responsible environmental management practices so as to maintain an appreciable standard of environmental degradation. (Like was done to the Fish Farmers Association).
7. We are also appealing to the World Bank to allocate one pick-up to us to facilitate our membership drives, and also to monitor illegal mining activities more effectively.
8. We are also advocating for the opening up of a Bank for Mining in general.
9. Land Owner must be educated properly on Mineral Laws to avoid causing embarrassment to themselves. They should insist on their royalties instead of granting verbal licenses,

Mr. Chairman, youth problems are National problems. If we fail to address youth problems as a nation, we would one day as a regret the consequences. Too many of our young people are suffering as a result of unemployment. Small Scale Mining, Legal and illegal has become the single largest employer of unskilled labour, and we must uphold it.

**I wish all Miners, Large Scale or Small Scale Success in their endeavours. Long Live Small Scale Mining! Long Live the Youth of Ghana! Long Live the Youth of the World!**

**GLORY BE TO GOD WHO IN HIS WISDOM HAS ENDOWED HUMANITY WITH SUCH A VALUABLE TREASURE AS GOLD.**

Thank you.