

# Press Release

## **Project Management Institute, Ghana Calls for Collective Action to Ensure Sustainable Small-Scale Mining Practices and the cessation of Illegal Mining**

### **Time's Up on Illegal Mining, Lets Save the Nation's Environment and Health - Project Management Institute, Ghana**

Accra, Ghana 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

The Project Management Institute, Ghana is alarmed at the devastating effects of illegal mining on the country. We cannot, as a nation, deliberately destroy our very own existence under the guise of keeping a select few in business. We are therefore urging all citizens and stakeholders to come together and say no to illegal mining but rather promote sustainable and responsible mining practices.

We cannot allow our nation's existence to be destroyed under the pretense of business. As Project Management Institute, Ghana, we are of the firm believe that all Ghanaians must unite to champion sustainable and responsible mining practices. This is not just a call; it is an urgent necessity to safeguard our environment, our health, and our future.

## The Urgency of Sustainable Practices

Illegal mining has ravaged Ghana's ecosystem. According to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainability means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Ghana, a proud member of the United Nations, has made limited progress toward the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land).

The time to change this is now.

The use of deadly chemicals like mercury and cyanide in mining operations and the disposal of the waste into water bodies has led to severe environmental degradation and health hazards.

Mercury and cyanide contamination in water bodies pose a dire threat to humans who rely on these sources for drinking, cooking, farming, among other things. Humans further consume the crops and wildlife which may have substantial deposits of these heavy metals.

### Environmental and Health Impacts

- a. **Polluted Water Bodies:** Mercury and other toxic chemicals have contaminated rivers and streams, making the water unsafe for consumption and agricultural use. Wild animals in our forests rely on the same contaminated water for hydration.
- b. **Depleted Forest Reserves:** Illegal mining activities have led to the destruction of vast forest areas, affecting biodiversity and contributing to climate change.
- c. **Health Implications:** The ingestion of heavy metals through contaminated water and the consumption of fish can lead to severe health issues, including neurological and developmental disorders.

### Responsible Project Management Practices

Stopping illegal mining and its environmental impacts requires a multifaceted approach that includes stringent regulations, advanced monitoring, community engagement, rehabilitation programs, stakeholder collaboration, economic alternatives, legal actions, environmental impact assessments, and public education.

To address these challenges, the Project Management Institute, Ghana advocates for the following responsible project management practices:

- d. **Strengthening Regulations:** Implementing and enforcing stringent environmental laws and regulations to control mining activities. This includes setting clear guidelines for legal mining operations and severe penalties for illegal mining.
- e. **Monitoring and Surveillance:** Utilizing advanced technologies such as satellite imagery, drones, and remote sensing to monitor mining activities and detect illegal operations promptly.
- f. **Community Engagement:** Educating and involving local communities in the fight against illegal mining. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns about the environmental and health impacts of illegal mining and encouraging community reporting of illegal activities. Communities, when entrusted with ownership of the lands and water bodies will offer better stewardship.
- g. **Rehabilitation Programs:** Developing and enforcing mine rehabilitation programs that require mining companies to restore mined areas to their natural state or to a condition that is safe and usable for other purposes.
- h. **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Working with various stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, local communities, and international organizations, to create a unified front against illegal mining.
- i. **Economic Alternatives:** Providing alternative livelihood opportunities for those involved in illegal mining. This can help reduce the economic incentive to engage in illegal activities.
- j. **Legal Actions and Penalties:** Taking legal actions against individuals and organizations involved in illegal mining and imposing heavy fines and penalties to deter such activities.
- k. **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs):** Mandating comprehensive EIAs before approving any mining projects to ensure that potential environmental impacts are identified and mitigated.

I. **Public Awareness and Education:** Running public awareness campaigns to educate the general public about the dangers of illegal mining and the importance of environmental protection.

**The Project Management Institute, Ghana is calling for the immediate:**

- **Halting of Illegal Mining:** Strengthening enforcement of mining regulations and increasing penalties for illegal activities.
- **Consultative Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving all stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and industry players, in decision-making processes.
- **Land Reclamation:** Restoring mined lands to their natural state through reforestation and soil rehabilitation.
- **Dredging and desilting of Damaged Water Bodies:** Removing sediments and pollutants from contaminated water bodies to restore water quality.
- **Purifying Polluted Water Bodies:** Implementing water treatment solutions to remove toxic chemicals and make water safe for consumption.
- **Afforestation of Degraded Forest Reserves:** Planting trees and restoring forest ecosystems to combat deforestation and climate change.
- **Criminalization of the acts:** Enforcing strict legal actions against individuals and entities involved in illegal mining activities will serve as a deterrent to others.

### **The Role of Government and Responsible Citizenship**

Illegal mining in Ghana, particularly gold extraction, has wrought severe environmental damage. Mercury and cyanide used in these operations have contaminated water bodies, destroyed forests, and caused significant health risks to communities.

PMI Ghana calls for action in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goals 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land), which the country has yet to meaningfully pursue.

We demand immediate steps, including stronger legal enforcement, stakeholder consultation, land restoration, and environmental rehabilitation. The government, citizens, and industry players must come together to protect Ghana's future.

For more information, please visit [www.pmigh.com](http://www.pmigh.com)

**Contact:** Project Management Institute, Ghana Email: [info@pmighana.org](mailto:info@pmighana.org) Phone: +233-24 3160831

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Frank Owusu-Asamoah', with a large initial 'F' and 'O'.

Frank Owusu-Asamoah, PMP<sup>®</sup>, MSc, AH-MC<sup>®</sup>

President,

Project Management Institute, Ghana