

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF MINING ACTIVITIES IN GHANA

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Mining for many decades served as an important component of countries revenue source especially for developing countries that have been endowed with the mineral wealth. If properly managed, countries can grow their economies with proceeds from mining activities in the form of royalties and foreign exchange earnings for the export of mineral related products. Such benefits from the mining sector have in most cases been used as justification and a social license for exploration and exploitation of minerals in most communities.

The study explores and assesses mining and its impacts on communities within which mining activities takes place. The focus has been on a mining community in Ghana called Asutifi South District of Ghana where mining is vigorously carried out by an American mining giant, Newmont Mining Corporation. The study investigates the real and underlying impacts of mining activities on the community in the light of the numerous promises and prospects that mining is said to provide for communities.

In as much as the mining sector have contributed and continually contributes to the economies of mineral endowed countries, one cannot lose sight of the fact that the very nature of mining itself in terms of the lifecycle of mining from discovery to closure seriously impacts on the lives of the communities in which it is undertaken. From the prospecting stages through the construction of mining infrastructure and the actual mining itself carries diverse impacts on communities that can very devastating on the one hand and developmental on the other hand. Usually some of the impacts are economics and environmental in nature and it is these impacts, real or imagined that this study sought to unravel.

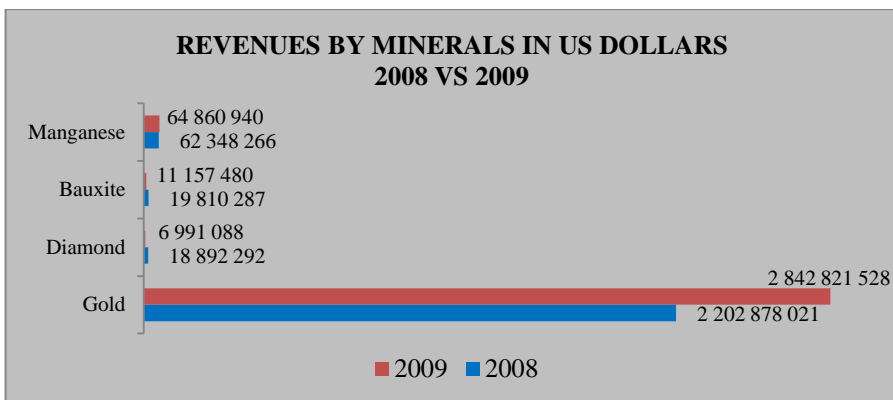


Figure 1. Economic impact of mining minerals in Ghana [2]

Mining is viewed as one of the important economic activities which have the potential of contributing to the development of economies. At the same time, the environmental, health and socio-economic impacts of mining on surrounding communities have been a major concern to governments, the general public and stakeholder organizations and individuals. While the contributions of mining activities to economic development of Ghana is well acknowledged, others contend that the gains from the mining sector to the economy is achieved at significant environmental, health and social costs to the country [1].

The research examines the Economics and Environmental impact of mining in Asutifi District of Ghana. Some communities within the Asutifi district area were covered for the data needed for the research. A total of 75 respondents were contacted for relevant information through questionnaire administration and interviews. In addition, institutions and organizations that hold stake in the mining and related environmental and health issues were contacted for relevant data. Data collection problems included respondents' bias and reluctance to answer certain questions. These were tackled through segmentation of the target population and verifications from field observations.

The research revealed that mining activities have resulted in land degradation leading to limited land available for local food production and other agricultural purposes in the Asutifi district. In addition, there is pollution which has affected water resources in the area. Air and noise pollution are also evident in the area. The combined effects of environmental problems have culminated into health problems with high prevalence of diseases such as malaria, respiratory tract infections and skin diseases. The hypothesis that infection of malaria and respiratory infections among residents is inversely related to distance from the mines was confirmed.

In view of efforts at restoration and intervention measures by Newmont Ghana Gold Limited in the form of re-afforestation, review of methods of operation and provision of alternative sources of drinking water to the affected communities, it has been recommended that the company revise its environmental management policy in the area to ensure that environmental effects of mining activities in the area are reduced to the barest minimum. In addition, it is recommended that the government, through the Asutifi district Assembly, build additional health centers, principally in all the villages close to the mining containment points to ensure adequate accessibility to health facilities. It is further recommended that the government of Ghana make conscious efforts to reduce the rate at which concessions are granted to mining companies in the country. All these measures should be fully integrated into the mining policy of the country

References:

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2. Wilson Alana, McMahon Fred, and Cervantes Miguel. Survey of mining 2012/2013. Survey director: Kenneth P. Green. Fraser Institute Annual. 2013. – 135p.

Економіка для екології: матеріали ХІХ Міжнародної наукової конференції, м. Суми, 30 квітня – 3 травня 2013 р. / редкол.: Д. О. Смоленніков, М. С. Шкурат. – Суми : Сумський державний університет, 2013. – С. 34-36.