The Impact of Mining on Women Farmers in Ntoroso, Asunafu District, Brong Ahafo

A research collaboration of ECASARD AND WoMin
**Brief history of Newmont Ghana Gold in Ntrotro**

Newmont Ghana Gold Limited started its operation in Ntrotro in 2004. This mining giant first settled in a community called Kwakyekrom, population, 600. Over a period of 11 years, Newmont appropriated an estimated 500 acres of land in this community. Five communities have been evicted from original settlements and relocated to new settlements. These communities are: Kwakyekrom, Tutu, Damso, Kantinka and Braha. Lands confiscated by this mining giant were used for the cultivation of cash crops including cocoa, cassava, and plantain. Uncultivated lands and forests used for forest harvesting were also taken over by Newmont.

Newmont initially promised the local people, and more precisely the local youth, employment. Although Newmont trained some of the youth in heavy vehicle operation, to date, none of the trained youth or any others have been employed by Newmont. Twenty women of the affected communities were trained in batik and soap making, but Newmont did not provide the capital required to start small businesses based on these new skills. The rest of the women of Kwakyekrom, Tutu, Damso, Kantinka Braha and Ntrotro were left without lands to cultivate and little hope or skills for alternate employment.

Affected communities that were resettled are now living in small structures without recreational centers, schools, or lands to farm. Some communities are still located very close to the mining/blasting site and need to be moved, but continue to wait for Newmont to make the necessary arrangements. While travelling to their farms or/and to the market, five people have died while crossing the dam constructed by Newmont.

**Community overview**

Ntrotro is a farming community in Asunafo North District in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana. The community derives its name from the Ntrotro River, which is a major source of water for drinking, sanitation and irrigation farming. The town was founded in 1768 and is 40 minutes’ drive from Sunyani, the capital of Brong-Ahafo. Ntrotro shares boundaries with communities in Acherensua to the north, Gyedu to the south, Ahafo to the east and west to the Keyansi. The only health centre serving the community is at Gyedu, which is some distance away. The population of the community is estimated to be 15,000, with 80 per cent being young people.

The town was founded in 1768 by two people, Nana Amakye and Mr Essah, who hailed from Barikese in the Ashanti Region. From inception, the town has had six substantive chiefs. The current chief is Nana Barima Twireko Ampem III. His accompanying female leader is Queen Mother Nana Kwartemaa Amponsah. The paramount chief, queen mother and council of elders govern the people through the traditional council. However, the district assembly also plays a vital role in the administrative work of the community and channels its activities through the assembly representative of the community, the Honourable Ntim Douglas.

Ntrotro is noted for its deciduous thick forest, hills, mountains, and plateau, where animals are hunted for food. The different tree species in the forest have medicinal values which local herbalists have harvested in the forest for centuries. In terms of water wealth, Ntrotro is endowed with rivers and streams including Ntrotro and Abufra, which run through the forests of the community. Farmers in the community use the water from rivers and streams for domestic chores, irrigation, fishing and for drinking. The food crops cultivated by these farmers include cocoa, plantain, cassava, cocoyam, maize and vegetables such as tomatoes, okra and eggplant. Historically, farming and hunting have been the basis for sustaining the people of Ntrotro. Given this, and the natural wealth of the area, social vices such as armed robbery, sex work and teenage pregnancy were not problems prior to the establishment of the Newmont mine.
Objectives of the project

This participatory action research project was carried out from May to July, 2014 and had the following objectives:

- create the conditions for women of Ntrotro to share their post-2004 experiences as a mining-affected community
- empower the women to advocate for their rights
- train the women in alternative livelihoods
- deepen their knowledge on mining laws
- dialogue with all stakeholders concerned to address the negative impacts of mining on women in the mining-affected areas.

Project activities

The following activities were carried out primarily in Ntrotro:

- training of enumerators for questionnaire administration
- community sensitisation, mobilisation and awareness programme
- media campaign, debate and radio talk shows
- data collection and analysis
- validation and focus-group discussion
- excursion to Tinga for community action against Newmont
- training in skills leading to new income generation activities (soap making and batik tie-dye).

Ms Gladys Adusah, a community facilitator with the PAR, speaks to community members in Ntrotro about the project
Key research findings

- Women were not involved in negotiations between the community and Newmont, leading to the leasing of lands for Newmont activities.
- Adequate compensation for the land leasing is not provided.
- None of the compensation is received by Ntotroso women, the primary agricultural producers of the community.
- Newmont has not employed community members as promised.
- The people of Ntotroso have not been provided with alternate lands to continue with farming activities.
- Women see their rights abused and some turn to sex work and other dangerous income generating activities in efforts to support their families.
- Poor resettlement conditions for the people relocated. Many were moved to inadequate housing, where services are poor or non-existent.
- The community has no knowledge of the mining laws, and therefore is disadvantaged in any negotiating process with Newmont.
- Fresh water sources were polluted by the activities of the mine.
- With the rise of Newmont’s gold mining, Ntotroso youth have been drawn to artisanal gold mining which is destroying the environment as well as killing the youth due to lack of safety.

Women in Ntoroso suffer because of the activities of the Newmont mine

Issues raised by Ntotroso leaders

The Queen Mother of Ntrotroso, Nana Kwartemaa Amposah, indicated that several problematic issues have arisen in the community since the inception of Newmont Gold Ghana Limited in 2004. Initially, Newmont employed her son, Amoako Simon, to work in the mine, but he was later laid-off without being provided with a reason. The Queen Mother emphasised that for the community as a whole, mining activities have made the cost of living very high in the community because more people have migrated to the community and increased the demand for basic goods. Newmont, as well as the local and national governments, should be held responsible for replacing livelihood systems of the affected communities because the Newmont mine has destroyed vast amounts of arable lands.

1 Gathered during focus group discussions, 20 July 2014.
Nana Akua Koma, Queen mother of Manu Camp shared her observations that Newmont’s blasting causes miscarriages for pregnant women, convulsions for children, and cracking and collapsing of homes and other structures in the community. She further added that the bore hole which was dug by Newmont to provide the community with clean and portable water is not serving its purpose as the water contains particles of sediment making it difficult to use. All the streams and rivers within the community have been contaminated with cyanide and other metallic elements, including mercury. She urges government and Newmont to provide relocation and rehabilitation for the community.

Cracks in the walls and foundation of a house in Ntotoeso are the result of blasting activities at the Newmont mine

Mary Boateng, a farmer leader of the Plantain Farmers Association, stated that her 10-acre farm was expropriated by the mining company and she received a mere 200 Cedis in compensation. She added that the mining company decided on the amount of compensation to farmers without consulting them. Further, payment of compensation was delayed by Newmont.

Akua Forkuo, one of the farmers of the community indicated that some of the lands taken by Newmont are not yet being used, yet the original inhabitants do not have the right to harvest their foodstuffs, which are therefore going to waste.

Agartha Adjei stated that Newmont should restructure compensation packages to include long-term compensation. Once restructured, compensation in her view should be paid monthly since land is a fixed asset.

Nana Fremah stated that Newmont should improve the resettlement package by building structures of adequate size for the affected farmers. Current family structures built by Newmont to house relocated families are adequate for two people, not five or more, which is common in the community.
A polluted water source (l) caused by Newmont mining activities and a sign post warning people not to drink or swim in the dam

Ms Mercy Osei said women in the community are farmers so they need land to farm to reduce hunger and poverty. Newmont should rehabilitate lands after mining, including reforestation.

Mary Manu, a youth leader in Ntotroso, noted that with the arrival of the mine there was a rise in incidents of rape, defilement, armed robbery, water pollution and unemployment. These social problems need resolution through government and other interventions.

Madam Mercy Offei, a teacher, expressed the need for ECASARD and WOMIN to build capacity around women’s rights and mining laws to help women tackle issues of mining.

The Medical Assistant of the clinic in Gyedu, which serves all communities in and around Ntotroso, stated that since Newmont began mining activities in the area, cases of malaria, typhoid, skin rashes, unwanted teenage pregnancies, abortion and eye problems have increased.

The assembly man of Ntotroso, Hon Ntim Douglas, complained bitterly about the alarming rise of dangerous galamsey (artisanal mining) operations in which most youth in the community are engaged.

Mobilising the community through media campaigns, debates and radio talk shows

Following the media sensitisation and broadcasting campaign to tackle the issues around the impact of mining in the Ntotroso community, the National Women’ College under the Farmers Organisation Network in Ghana (FONG) undertook a study visit to the community to get first-hand information from the people and show solidarity with the Ntotroso Women Farmers Group. The following problems are affecting day to day life in the community:

- Mining activities pollute fresh water sources and force residents to buy water at great expense
- Polluted water also causes health problems, including body bleaching and skin diseases, discours clothes and rusty and corrodes cooking utensils.
- Accidental deaths are more common because people fall into the deep pits created by artisanal miners.
- The destruction of local cocoa farms to make way for mining activities is leading to further poverty and suffering.
Galamsey (artisanal mining) operations in Ntrotroso contribute to accidental deaths

Excursion to Tinga
As part of the PAR, members of the Plantain Farmers Association of Ntrotroso visited women farmers in Tinga, a community which has worked to prevent Newmont from fully establishing its activities in Tinga. Farmers asked questions about the negative impacts of mining and raised the following concerns:

- Women are not consulted when companies negotiate for access to land or compensation benefits.
- When Achinese mining activities damaged the environment, it undermined women’s ability to provide food and clean water for their families and increased their workload.
- Compensation and benefits were paid to men “on behalf of” their families, denying women access to mining’s financial benefits and potentially increasing their economic dependence on men.
- Women lost their traditional status in society because mining creates a cash-based economy.

A woman in Tinga speaks to the media about the effects of mining in her community.
Training in alternative livelihoods

As part of the PAR project, 25 women from the plantain farmer group in Ntotroso, who lost their farm lands to the introduction of mining activities, were invited to train in soap making, washing soda production, and batik tie and dye as a means to begin developing alternative livelihoods. The three day training program was held in Ntotroso, February 9-11, 2015. The participants were enthusiastic about the training appealed for more capacity building to empower them to advocate for their rights in all spheres of life.

Alternative livelihoods include soap making, batik tie and dye
Recommendations

The women of Ntotroso are appealing for the following:

- Government to make mining laws accessible to the citizens of the country, especially women.
- Rehabilitation in the form of training and investment support for alternate livelihoods for all those whose lands have been expropriated.
- Restructured compensation packages from Newmont to cover long-term losses all those affected by Newmont operations.
- Improved resettlement packages from Newmont as per the needs of those resettled.
- The inclusion of women in all mining-related negotiations between communities, government and companies.
- Appropriate regulation by government to assure that mining activities are environmentally friendly and not hazardous to people and community dwellers. Where damage is likely to be caused, the cost of such damage should be estimated and paid by companies in advance.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems should be put in place to check the activities of mining companies.
- Democratic and inclusive community involvement in the signing of memoranda of understanding.
- Education, training and employment opportunities for women and girls in mining affected communities.

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