



‘Soon there will be no-one left to take the corpses to the morgue’: Accumulation and abjection in Ghana’s mining communities

Ray Bush

School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Ghana’s galamsey or artisanal miners offer a strategy of resistance to state mining policy and foreign company operations. Galamsey provide significant injections of sustained income to local communities and clamping down on their activities is at best short sighted and at worst a strategy that promotes community abjection. The article reviews the experience of two communities in the Wassa West District of Ghana and especially the changing livelihoods of female headed households since the Government of Ghana has restricted the activities of the galamsey.

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This article explores the ways in which Ghana’s *galamsey* or small-scale unlicensed artisanal miners offer a strategy of resistance to state mining policy and foreign mining company operations.¹ Galamsey provide an alternative to commoditisation of land and gold production and a greater distribution of the benefits from mining than is currently offered by state and corporate control of gold mining. While galamsey are famously denounced as criminals, vandals, environmental polluters and self-harmers, it might be more appropriate to recognise that they promote both their own livelihoods and those of the communities that live alongside their operations (Tschakert and Singha, 2007). They certainly seem to do that to greater effect than the so-called alternative livelihood projects that have been used to wean the young, unemployed and dispossessed away from rural poverty and neglect. Galamsey operations also offer far more benefits to

local residents than does the Government of Ghana’s disbursement of mining royalties or employment opportunities offered by the large-scale mines. It is also likely that the relatively new strategy to incorporate galamsey into regularised, and therefore controlled, small-scale artisanal mining will fail to attract youth into licensed mining.

I review evidence from two periods of field work in Western Ghana in November 2006 and August 2007. My report on interviews with communities in two villages, with representatives from mining companies, the Government of Ghana (GoG) and galamsey is pessimistic with regard to any positive outcome of contemporary policy. The criminalisation of galamsey activities has been driven by GoG belief that if they promote the sanctity of property laws to defend company concessions they can protect investors from trespass and deliver a sound investment climate (Interview Senior National Security Official, Accra, November 2006 see also Ghana Chamber of Mines, 2006, p. 18). For at least two reasons that is fanciful. First, despite criminalisation of galamsey and the militarisation of mining areas to squash unlicensed mining, the galamsey are mobile, skilled at finding gold deposits and innovative at resisting capture. Second, while there is an unprecedentedly high gold price, and even moderate foreign investment, mining executives are averse to moving their

E-mail address: R.C.Bush@leeds.ac.uk

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capital and operations to new locations. Herein lies some optimism in the analysis that follows. Galamsey offers the young and many women enormous income earning opportunity (Hilson and Potter, 2003, 2005). As one senior local government official said to me in the heart of one of Ghana's most important mining regions, the mines have taken community land, destroyed it and not provided employment. Royalties are 'woefully inadequate' and 'young men need to eat, to get something done' and are therefore attracted to galamsey (Interview Western Region 26 November 2006).

Before looking at how communities and galamsey resistance to GoG policy and mining company activity is emerging in the Western Region, I sketch the framework in which mining can be best understood in the contemporary period. This context is crucial as much that is written about the social consequences of mining for communities and host governments is descriptive, moralistic in tone and politically apologetic for failing to deliver community conformity to displacement and dispossession. While I introduce aspects of the living conditions for villagers and galamsey I am also concerned to explore these as part of sites of dispossession and abjection² that have been created by the GoG and corporations to raise the returns to foreign capital, control peasant communities and impoverish villagers.

Dispossession and poverty creation: making way for the mines

Recent debate about prospects for African development has centred on new corporate responsibility, mining company transparency, greater openness and partnerships with communities and other 'stakeholders' (Bonnie Campbell, 2004). As Ghana News Agency reported in July (2007), Joyce Aryee, the Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Chamber of Mines noted the Chamber was committed to 'core values of honesty, transparency, good governance, good corporate citizenship and total commitment when providing leadership to solve national issues relating to mining' (GNA 19 July 2007). She confirmed that the Chamber was a signatory to the UN Global Compact that promotes 'core values in human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption' (GNA 19 July 2007). This has included the need to control and limit the influence of unlicensed miners seen as disrupters to orderly investment regimes and smooth allocation of resources in mining enclaves. If there have been 'bad old days' of toxic spills, polluted waterways and dislocation of mine affected communities, this was something of the past and not the enlightened present (Interview: AGA Official, Obuasi, August 2007). But this rhetoric, as we will see, masks much that continues from the past. Enquiries in villages that nestle close to mines, or with villagers that were relocated and resettled as deep shaft mines converted to open cast tell a different story. That story is shaped by patterns of capital accumulation promoted by mines and the GoG. This has involved dispossession of rural livelihoods, land, water and hunting rights and they have been overlaid by the continued uneven incorporation of Ghana into the international political economy. Much has been said recently about the need of Africa to become further integrated into the world economy, that Africa's problem is that there is insufficient integration, that the continent's capacity to trade needs improving and this can be achieved by improvements in governance, aid and debt relief (CFA, 2005; DFID, 2006).

Contrary to this dominant neo-liberal formula for African development we need to note that Africa's poverty is not the

result of the absence of the continent from being integrated into the world economy. Africa's poverty, and here Ghana is no exception, is the product of the region's differential incorporation into the world economy. Africa is not a poor trading continent: trade as a percentage of GDP is only a little less than that of China at 55% and is twice the proportion of India (Melamed, 2006). The problem is what Africa is trading: unprocessed mining and raw materials and seasonal fruits—commodities where high values accrue by consuming western states and not producer countries. Africa has a high dependency upon the export of natural resources—they accounted for 80% of exports in 2000 compared with 31% for all developing countries. In 2003, 12 African countries were dependent upon a single commodity for exports (Bond, 2006a, p. 58).

Post war experience and evidence contradicts the hype surrounding periodic high world commodity prices and international agency, and corporate rhetoric, that mineral extraction will pave the way for Africa's increased development. Resource led growth has in fact created increased dependency and underdevelopment. Price fluctuation, and the decline in the price of raw materials since World War 2, relative to the prices of manufactures makes it difficult for African producing states to develop a stable development policy. Revenue flows are not sustained and mineral production is capital intensive offering little hope or opportunity to hire and train staff locally. Price fluctuation and what is described by the G8 as moral and ethical failures by the international community to halt African poverty confuses the real cause of the continent's malaise with a Christian handwringing reminiscent of colonial paternalism. Africa's development crisis is a consequence of more than 25 years of international policy prescription failure and the ensuing financial bedlam (Easterly, 2006).

Policy makers and companies alike continue the publicity and excitement that mineral led growth is both possible and desirable in Ghana, especially if illegal miners are controlled. But there is a failure to ask the big questions: how exactly can the mining strategy benefit communities dispossessed of their assets to make way for corporate expansion? And what kind of social engineering is being manufactured by clearing concessions of galamsey, denying local community access to the wealth that small-scale mining generates and marginalising especially women and youth from income generating activity linked to either small-scale mining or larger corporate concessions? The strategy of abjection for mining communities has recently been described in Nigeria, a comparator Ghanaians would object to, as reflecting the 'bleaker world of military neoliberalism'? (Watts, 2006, p. 8).

The context in which galamsey should be examined is one of capitalist accumulation in Africa in general and Ghana in particular. We know that there are two dimensions to capitalist accumulation. One relates to the relationships between the capitalist and the wage worker and the character of property rights, exchange and ideology that mystifies the exploitative consequences of the market and production. The other is the relationship between capitalist centres and non-capitalist economies or imperialism (Luxemburg, 1968; Bond and Desai 2006).

The African case is interesting, if it is possible to generalise for a moment. While many commentators had foretold that primitive accumulation would be a forerunner to capitalist development, that amongst other things there would be a relatively short historical process of divorcing producers from the land to work in towns, much of the contemporary relations between imperialist states and former colonies, but also within Africa, is shaped by continued patterns of primitive accumulation (Bond, 2006a; Bush, 2007). One commentator has noted how many of the social and economic processes associated with the original capitalist accumulation in Europe are daily repeated in the Global South

² The term abjection is owed to the fascinating work of Ferguson (1999) about which I detail more below.

more generally. They can certainly be observed in Western Ghana where corporate mining and resource extraction, financial control and coercive labour regimes are continuously evident: they are reproduced by capitalist accumulation driven by mineral extraction. Elements of these processes that generate persistent impoverishment include:

Commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations, conversion of various forms of property rights...into exclusive private property rights, suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative, indigenous, forms of production and consumption (Harvey, 2003, p. 74).

This pattern of persistent primitive accumulation in Western Ghana has manufactured enclavity. The enclave economy may be characterised by capital intensive production, in the midst of high labour surplus; large-scale often monopolistic production where extra economic coercion features as part of corporate control and where expatriate elites dominate key decision making. The enclave, moreover, is a key element in the extroversion of the national economy that is skewed towards external orientation frustrating national planning and economic independence, and increasing susceptibility to global market fluctuations of raw materials (Olukoshi cited in Bond, 2006b, p. 30).

Abjection as social engineering?

Concluding his study of urban life in Zambia's copper belt and the failings of modernity to deliver its promise of 'moving forward or joining up with the world', Ferguson noted that the only appropriate term to 'capture this sense of humiliating expulsion is abjection'. 'Abjection refers to a process of being thrown aside, expelled, or discarded' but it also means 'being thrown down' 'thus being debased and humiliated' (1999, p. 236 emphasis in original). This characterisation fits the experience of many in Wassa West District of Ghana and also near Obuasi in the country's Ashanti region—a case that I do not report in detail here. Two points are important. The first is that abjection does not mean being excluded from government policy or corporate interest. Abjection is an active process of being expelled, thrust out from economic and political processes that policy makers declare are intended to further integrate, and thus 'develop' local communities. Second, while I will show this has been the experience in each of the three communities I refer to, and particularly for the women and youth in them, galamsey activities challenge abjection.

I will label the two villages A and B. They may be identified by Ghana mining watchers but I have no desire to encourage that. All respondents spoke to me openly and while many wanted me to convey their particular grievances to the mines and policy makers more generally this is not necessarily the context to do that. The grievances are common, and well known to the policy makers who created them: dispossession from village locations (euphemistically called resettlement or relocation); landlessness as the result of the denial of access to land and the destruction of village land; joblessness where false promises of employment (in capital intensive activity) has never been met; and the use of chiefs as conduits for corporate and government policy and money.

Villages A and B fall within the 81 km² concession of Abooso Goldfields Company Limited about 30 km northeast of Tarkwa in Ghana's Western Region. The population size of A is about 3500, B 2250. Village A is a resettled community moved to make way for the expansion of Gold Fields in 1996–1997 as the mine expanded and converted from deep shaft to open cast. Gold Fields recently operated very close to village B and has now left a large unfilled

pit in the wake of its operations. Plans to widen the road between Tarkwa and Damang will have calamitous effects on village B. The road currently dissects the village already creating dust and air borne pollution. When the road is 'upgraded' to carry heavy haulage trucks travelling between the mine and Tarkwa, pollution will increase further and the traders who currently try to sell their wares by the road will be displaced. Village B is denied access to the mining concession which is the location of its historical land. Villages A and B have their own history of mining for gold from before the 19th Century and galamsey remains a significant activity. Other economic activity where access to land is permitted includes self-provisioning agriculture and petty trading. Services in the communities are rudimentary. Water is pipe borne facilitated by the mining company and this supply is supplemented by bore holes provided by the district assembly. Village A has three basic level schools and B has a small six class room blocks, again at the basic level of provision. Secondary school provision as well as a small health post is located for both villages and neighbouring settlements in Huni Valley.

Major dispossession of land from village A began at the time of the construction of Abooso Goldfields Limited in 1996 (Adjaye, 2007). At that time the laying of new power lines, rail and diversion of rivers and relocation of two villages impacted negatively on villagers' access to land for agriculture, and hunting and gathering. The starter pit began in August 1997 and soon after completion of the plant upgrade in 1999 a third village in the area was relocated. Village A was among the first nationally to be relocated as a result of mine expansion. Chiefs and elders noted that this was a draw back for them in any negotiation about relocation with the company or with the GoG. They simply did not have the evidence of a resettlement experience from elsewhere to draw on and with their resettlement in 1996 felt short of information, and impotent in the face of 'inevitability' about losing their land. The relocation of another village alongside them as the mine expanded its operations was also a surprise to villagers in A as this had never been declared as part of the resettlement (Interviews, Chiefs and elders, 24 November 2006).

Village B had not been resettled or relocated but respondents complained about land loss as open cast mining commenced next to them in July 2005 and was completed by mid 2006. Villagers were denied access to the concession, and drinking water was contaminated by mining activity—they are now left with a large pit in an area of forest where they hitherto farmed. The District Assembly and the company did build a three class room block, although did not furnish it, and toilet, but chiefs and elders noted destruction to the road as truck traffic increased and as the open cast developed so too did complaints about blast damage to buildings and increased air borne pollution.

More than 20,000 people from 15 villages were resettled between the late 1990s and early 21st century. Of these more than 5000 people were galamsey. Gold Fields and the GoG organised local task forces comprised of at least 7 from the community to supplement local police to prevent people who had been resettled from entering the mine concessions. Village A found itself between a rock and a hard place. Villagers were denied access to the concession which now covered the historical site of the village and they were denied access too to the neighbouring forest which bordered their new location. Villagers faced abjection. Grumbling over poor information regarding the consequences of their relocation, inadequate compensation, poor local services and failure to meet employment needs of especially the youth led to sustained interest in galamsey.

Both villages had a large number of galamsey and this activity did not diminish with resettlement. Gold Fields of which the GoG has a 10% shareholding, in accordance with Minerals and Mining Law of 1986 stress that compensation was dealt with fairly and

alternative livelihood projects will replace community loss of land used for self-provisioning and income generation. Yet households were only compensated for crops in the ground not for loss of total farm size and compensation for cocoa trees, amongst other things, did not allow for the length of time the tree would yield its crop.

Gold Fields emphasises that communication between communities and mining companies is much improved since the mid-1990s and that the problem is persistence of *galamsey* which inhibits alternative livelihoods from taking off. Mining companies now stress the idea of 'mutual benefit' between themselves and communities. A senior manager at Gold Fields stressed the need for companies to be allowed to make their profits so some of that revenue can be returned to communities. The manager believed that whilst there was much suspicion in the period before 2002, including a major cyanide spillage, Gold Fields has made a vast improvement in community relations, they 'factor communities into every aspect of mine development', and this helps stop 'wild allegations' about the consequences of blasting and other activities. Gold Fields management in its two mines in Tarkwa and Damang and also in the country head office in Accra stress the way in which they convinced the company hierarchy in South Africa that alternative livelihoods for communities needed to be developed. They also emphasise the significance of a Trust Fund established in 2002 where 0.5% of pre-tax profit plus USD\$1 for every ounce of gold produced helped develop a 5 year development plan working with US NGO Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI).

Gold Fields have developed a programme to promote infra-structural development in communities affected by mining and a socio-economic enhancement programme (Gold Fields n.d.). With its USD\$1 million trust fund budget Gold Fields stresses the need to secure community development for the time when the mine closes (Interview, Gold Fields Senior Manager Damang, 24 November 2006). The list of proposed projects have included oil palm plantations, fish ponds, school and health facilities, garri processing and pig rearing and grasscutter breeding (Gold Fields Ghana, 2005). The critique of these projects, the fanciful nature of their sustainability, failure to attract community involvement and inadequacy in addressing employment needs of communities dispossessed of their land is well known (Hilson et al., 2007; Hilson and Banchirigah, 2009). A senior Gold Fields manager in Accra noted how alternative livelihoods cannot be imposed on communities and that his company now looked 'at the whole picture' asking communities to devise their own projects. But he seemed unable to fathom that proposed alternative livelihoods will never replace *galamsey* and they will never replace the importance of access to land (Interview Gold Fields Senior Manager, Accra 23 August 2007).

There are perhaps two overarching reasons why the alternative livelihoods approach in villages A and B have not worked well: first, because they are associated with collusion between traditional authority holders and the mines and second because they are inappropriate: they do not meet felt need of the most impoverished and dispossessed. Chiefs and elders were rebuked by the youth and women in both villages for colluding with and benefiting from mining company contracts. Respondents from group meetings in both villages noted that chiefs had been persuaded to accept the hardships that had accompanied the growth of open cast mining. Despite the obvious caveat that there is often tension between the young and the old, office holders and those without official status, chiefs were criticised for using their position to influence the ways in which mining operations were legitimised and they were lambasted for not understanding village discontent and failing to be transparent in the ways in which money for local village projects was allocated and to whom. Mining companies used chiefs as the interlocutors with the

village. The companies also used them to hire casual labour and in return were allegedly rewarded with small contracts from the mines. This did not mean that chiefs and elders refrained from criticising the mine operations. In both villages, they lamented the erosion of village social fabric as a consequence of mining development that disrupted practices where women, elders and youth would meet frequently to discuss village issues. They noted how beneficial and prevalent *galamsey* operations had been in the past, that absence of cash in the local economy increased poverty, hardships and people's search for employment away from the area, including *galamsey*. Taken together these laments conveyed a lack of what elders referred to as village cohesion compared with the past, an increase in local theft, especially of foodstuffs, some prostitution which one well placed woman noted the men will deny, and antagonism by the youth to unemployment and their frustration at not being able to use their polytechnic and university education to get work locally.

There seemed to be a mismatch between livelihood projects promoted by the mining companies and the needs of villagers. Respondents were unhappy that the village was always presented with projects rather than allowed to discuss their felt needs. One of these was the need to continue with *galamsey*. The youth also wanted workshop provision for carpentry and practical artisanal skill development. They also wanted land to cultivate and library provision. These local needs of course varied between the young with education and those without and women who needed to provide income for the household as husbands and partners abandoned the village to search for work elsewhere. Landless or small holders, single headed households were desperate for income generation to afford purchase of food and school clothing and lunch money or transport costs for their children. The overriding concern of villagers was the failure to access land on a scale and that matched opportunity before the expansion of open cast mining. There simply was nothing the mining companies could do to persuade villagers to accept the destruction or the transformation of the local environment, the prohibitions on returning to village land and the consequences of open cast activity, namely contamination of water ways, dust pollution and the decline for some of bronchial health. As one graduate noted, 'before at least we had land to farm, now we have nothing' (Group meeting Village A, 25 November 2006). The youth stressed that their biggest concerns were unemployment and the disenchantment with government and mining companies to deliver promises of work and development. There were seldom opportunities for venting anger at village dispossession. There were consultation committees between the mines and communities but these were seen as vehicles for traditional authorities to cement relations with mine managers rather than representing the grievances of the poor in the community or the youth. It was normal for MPs, for example, to only pitch up on the eve of elections but it is possible the ruling party will have a shock at the level of ill feeling when campaigning starts for the 2008 elections. With a possible eye to that it is interesting to note the unprecedentedly outspoken attack on mining companies in the Western Region by the regional minister in August 2007. Anthony Evans Amoah noted in an emergency meeting with the regional security council and mining companies chiefs 'we are all aware that the affected communities have lived on your concessions where they earned their livelihoods for centuries, and to displace them without assuring them of a regular and sustainable source of livelihood is to say the least, unfortunate' (*The Chronicle* 22 Aug 2007, p. 8).

The meeting, at which the regional minister launched his attack on mining company failure to deliver meaningful and sustainable alternative livelihoods, followed a military roundup of *galamsey* and the confiscation of their equipment. The Minister

lamented that the roundup had not achieved its aims of stopping galamsey activities—they simply moved out of the region to neighbouring gold-bearing areas—but that he would seek to ensure an atmosphere of peace and security for the people in the Western Region. Communities were in fact outraged by attacks on the galamsey and the ensuing financial and social costs borne by villages as the major, and in many cases the only income source was cut off.

The clampdown on galamsey has been ongoing since November 2006. The GoG and especially, it seems, the National Security advisors within it, had been driven by mining company pressure to defend property rights and contractual obligations that follow from the allocation of mining concessions. The issue of national security was that Ghana might lose the confidence of international investors if the state could not guarantee the security of mining company investment. In attacking galamsey however, the GoG also attacked the livelihoods of the communities that benefitted from artisanal mining. The military operation in the Western Region took place in the context of two important themes. The first was increased pressure by some GoG politicians but certainly from a range of outspoken and well organised advocacy groups, like the Wasswa West Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) that alternative livelihoods were not delivering well being to communities dispossessed by corporate mining. The second theme was the view expressed by the Ghana Chamber of Mines and the GoG that a mechanism to dampen galamsey operations would be to regularise them, license their operations and allocate land and control their gold sales with a tributer system managed by either companies or the state.

Desperate to control the galamsey and to do so by stressing regularisation would benefit the artisanal miners Joyce Aryee, for the Ghana Chamber of Mines noted 'Weaning the youth from illegal mining activities into small-scale mining has been one of the key challenges'. She argued that small-scale mining would generate jobs, create more social employment opportunities and help in rural development more generally (GNA 19 July). The Chamber of Mines wanted galamsey stopped and for all artisanal mining to be regularised. This was a mechanism to ensure corporate control of mining which was guilty, despite Aryee's claims to the contrary of not delivering alternative livelihood projects that could replace community land loss. Crucially, the policy to evict galamsey was not uniform. Officials in the Minerals Commission, it seems, did not support the use of the military recognising that National Security concerns had been used by the companies. Yet officials also recognised that the lure of gold meant that previous strategies for trying to get traditional power holders to stop the youth from mining in 2005–2006 had failed. It was not that there had been a failure to announce the likely use of military to remove galamsey and confiscate their equipment (Interview Minerals Commission 21 August 2007). One senior mining official also noted the heavy handed use of the military had undermined opportunities for negotiation with the galamsey that his company had been trying to promote (Interview 23 August 2007 Accra).

The Minerals Commission has a policy of licensing galamsey and allocating them land. One difficulty is that the actual numbers of galamsey are unknown but that if family members and dependents are included the number may be as many as 4 million. The Minerals Commission is understaffed for the task of delivering licensing. The procedures, moreover, for accessing licenses is bureaucratic and the amounts and locations of available government land inadequate and locations often remote (Banchirigah 2008). Seventy-two square kilometres has been identified for small-scale miners in Bolgatanga for example but it is unclear to what extent local authorities and communities had been consulted on the allocation of this land. A license will cost at

least Cedis 2.5 million and an EPA permit Cedis 300,000. There is then the need to access an operating permit, pay rent for stool land, at least Cedis 2000 per acre per annum and a maximum of 25 acres per license renewable after 5 years. A concession is made to the licensee that there will be no clamour to enforce collection of taxes.

There are at least two disincentives for galamsey to access a license to operate. The first is a bureaucratic one, that the area for mining needs to be identified, if it is not part of GoG listed area, notice for 21 days has to be given of intent to mine and there has to be agreement from the District Assembly for an area to be demarcated for artisanal mining. When these procedures have been met the galamsey will need to go to Accra to sign a lease. In August 2007, 180 leases were being processed. This process can take more than 12 months to complete and it is a disincentive to people who need quick access to cash.

The second reason why this process of licensing is a disincentive to the majority of galamsey is that it reduces flexibility, mobility and local strategies to ameliorate poverty and safeguard livelihoods. There was also no guarantee that the licensed concession would supply gold deposits on a scale that would meet the needs of galamsey. The very nature of the galamsey operations was that they were finely tuned to the areas where they worked. Licensing focussed on control of a social and political problem, a problem centred on resistance by large numbers of indigenous people to dispossession. It did not offer a solution to land loss, dislocation and poverty.

Women, youth and resistance

The clampdown on galamsey has had enormous repercussions for villages A and B. There has been a dramatic increase in poverty and job losses for women and youth. Outmigration in both villages seems to have been extensive since November 2006 and the reasons given why there would soon be no one left in village B that is fit and able to take corpses to the morgue was because people had migrated in search for work. Women headed households in both villages were challenged by the dramatic plunge in income earning opportunities as galamsey operations were shut down. All 10 respondents in both villages noted a plunge in income for their household as employment of relatives or of their own engagement with galamsey had stopped. The consequences for child health, continuing education, changes in diet, or simply the skipping of meals was extensive. Both villages had historically been heavily involved with galamsey. As we know galamsey provides a valuable 'employment engine' (Hilson and Banchirigah, 2009). Job creation goes beyond the direct process of accessing gold (Yakovleva, 2007). Galamsey employ local labour, ore washes and diggers, machine operators and they provide markets for village products or entrepreneurial activity for hawkers and traders especially not only for the sale of foodstuffs to the miners, but also provides markets for technical supplies to repair machinery used in gold extraction and processing and financiers and white collar workers if accountants and bookkeepers are involved. In short, galamsey provides an enormous boost to economies in the areas where they operate and this boost is far greater than anything that accompanies corporate mining. This disjuncture is partly accounted for by the difficulties District Authorities have in accessing a sufficiently large share of mining royalties to distribute to communities affected by land dispossession. But it is also the case that the immediacy and scale of community involvement in galamsey provides an economic and social return that is far greater than any formula offered to compensate villages for dispossession resulting from corporate monopoly of gold mining.

Both villages were affected economically by the decline in income earning opportunity that resulted from the closure of local galamsey operations. Increased debt burden had been caused by the military roundup. Two female headed household respondents noted that loans they had taken out to buy pans and rice to cook for galamsey were now outstanding and could not be repaid. There was insufficient local effective demand to continue cooking and the miners who had bought the food they cooked had moved away, some without paying for the food they had consumed. This calamity was difficult for the two women to manage. They could not draw on assets or loans from other family members as they too had been hit by losses resulting from the clampdown on galamsey. It was not only women who directly served galamsey or worked for them as headcarriers or grinders that suffered. Market traders have taken a dramatic fall in sales as local demand for foodstuffs has fallen. This decline resulted from outmigration of youth and reduced household needs within the community. The financial crisis also hit market traders as households reduced food budgets and changed diets as a result of falling income levels. One maize seller in village A noted how her income had fallen from about Cedis 40,000 a week to zero. She had tried to diversify her income earning potential by selling women's dresses and underwear. But unlike when the galamsey were local women would pay as they bought the clothes from her she was forced now to accept credit in the hope that her customers would eventually be able to find cash to pay her. This did not happen and she was forced into bankruptcy. She would now have panic attacks as she prepared for the day ahead: although she had managed to transport her father to the morgue, she had no money with which to bury him. She noted that she was now a user of credit from food sellers. She noted how she would miss meals to ensure that the children would be fed but would also often simply ignore her children's needs. She noted how she suspected collusion between the town chairman and head of security at the mine to invite the military to the area and help in what she saw was the brutalisation of the youth.

Another respondent from village A noted the dramatic decline in income after cessation for galamsey. She had earned upto Cedis 200,000 a week and this was now reduced to almost zero. Her safety net was that she could access some family land, and indeed rented out a portion of it but her difficulty remained what to do with the produce from her farm. For while it would provide self-provisioning for her family of three children for half the year she also needed cash to provide for necessities notably rent of Cedis 40,000 a month of which she was 4 months in arrears and materials for school. This respondent was trenchant and clear in her mind how the standard of living in the village had worsened since the onset of open cast mining and clampdown on galamsey.

There were similar findings from respondents in village B. A kenkey seller and sand carrier for galamsey was now penniless as her income earning opportunity had ceased. She did have a safety net of a small plot of family land but had difficulty marketing her produce because of low village demand. She had an outstanding debt for the maize purchase used to make kenkey for which she no longer had a market. It was noted by one respondent that even the Queen Mother who had a chop bar now had no customers and was owed money. There was recurrent complaint among respondents in both villages of respiratory disease and poor quality drinking water, village B noting higher pollution in the Huni and Atwena River compared with 5 years ago. As a health worker in neighbouring Huni valley recalled 'people's livelihoods have been truncated', many people suffer from extreme stress and require counselling and this state of anxiety was not helped by the persistent military presence (Interview Huni Valley 15 August 2007).

One group who were also adversely affected were those of school age. Children were being pulled out of school, even where schooling was free as costs of transport, uniforms and lunches were proving too high to meet. Discussion with a teacher of 12 years who worked in both primary and junior secondary was instructive. The fall in galamsey activities had an immediate impact on the abilities of school children to attend and to concentrate in class when they attended. He thought as many as 80% of school children he taught had a parent who worked in galamsey. Falls in attendance and lack of punctuality were determined by family disruption since the arrival of the military into the area. If there was no food in the pupils household children stayed at home. He also reported the shabby nature of children's clothing and how this led to name calling and bullying in school.

Descent into poverty as a result of the attacks on galamsey, especially for those without savings and with large households and for those who had no access to land seems to have been immediate. Safety nets of savings were scarce and access to communal labour declined as youth out migrated leaving women, the old and infirm behind. Women tried to find alternative livelihoods but the struggle was that effective demand in the communities was plummeting. The villages were becoming sites of abjection.

Ways forward?

The GoG now feels that it has a strategy to reduce the impact of galamsey. It is a strategy to remove them to licensed activities so foreign companies can retain monopoly control over 'their' concessions. I have noted that the scale of the licensing and the mechanisms for so doing may be ineffective. It will also leave the miners critically beholden to local power holders and traditional authorities, allow for rent-taking from their activities by potentially corrupt officials, and leave them without the independence and unalienable right to assets which they so desperately need. In this sense they will remain adversely incorporated to the wider industry (see Andries du Toit, 2004).

There is also no attention to the sequencing of promoting such a policy where households and communities bereft of access to income from galamsey are left without meaningful alternative livelihoods. But an alternative to galamsey is not what is demanded by communities. Galamsey will need to operate alongside mining companies for many years to come—after all they have been present for 500 years. Continuation of galamsey may need to mean more than even the idea touted at the moment, by the better informed, that galamsey mine parts of concessions not used by companies—or at least until the companies require access to those areas. Perhaps galamsey need to be incorporated and integrated much more closely with company activities and not as adjuncts or even tributaries to company decision makers. A possible model would be that of the core-satellite or contract farming systems common to tree plants, where the small producer is, at minimum, in a legally binding contractual relationship with the core company facility which processes and/or markets the crop.

However, mining companies as we know are concerned first and foremost with global strategy and not local interests. The GoG needs to challenge that idea, and stress the potential gains and profitability that a decriminalised, integrated mining policy represents, in much the way that this has been happening throughout South America. Yet we do know that African states have been subordinated to rigours of neoliberalism much more aggressively than countries in the southern cone. The reality, however, is that if mining is so important to the GoG, to mining companies and certainly to local communities, a radical and more

integrated approach to viewing the inter-relationship between these parties (stakeholders?) needs to be explored. This may mean challenging the idea that companies have sovereign control over concessions. It will also require the GoG to understand that they have responsibility first and foremost to the communities over which they have a temporary mandate. Instead of a habit of viewing governmentality as merely a relationship of rent-taking from the large-scale mining sector, ostensibly on behalf of the wider population, the GoG will need to widen its purview to fostering and supporting the economic activities of the majority, even where this potentially puts them into conflict with the formal sector. The mining companies will not be leaving Ghana very soon, especially as the gold price remains buoyant, so corporate threats need to be put on one side. It is time for the GoG to think beyond the short-term needs of satisfying demands for the security of its investors and address instead the livelihoods of its citizens.

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Ray Bush is Professor of African Studies and Development Politics in the School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, UK. His recent book is *Poverty and Neoliberalism* (Pluto Books 2007). He is also Deputy Chair of *The Review of African Political Economy*.