



Der Public Eye Global Award 2009 für unverantwortliches Konzernverhalten geht an

Newmont Mining Corporation

Laudatio von Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, Executive Director of the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM)

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the organisers for providing me with the opportunity to talk about some of the pain and suffering that big corporate bodies inflict on poor communities to satisfy the profit maximisation objectives of their shareholders. Whilst the government praised its efforts in attracting Newmont to operate in Ghana, WACAM and other mining advocacy NGOs expressed cynicism that Newmont would export its bad corporate culture including bad environmental practices, intimidation of activists, and human rights violations to Ghana. Newmont rebuffed our concerns and stated that it had learnt its lessons from its operations in Peru, Indonesia, Nevada etc and would get its operations in Ghana right. A proverb in my local language states that, "Character is like pregnancy, it cannot be hidden." In the same way, corporate culture cannot be hidden. Newmont has two mining projects in Ghana, the Ahafo mine located in the tropical Cocoa-growing area in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana and the development project known as the Akyem project located in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Ahafo mine

Newmont purchased the Ahafo deposits in 2002 and started commercial production in June 2006.

- In 2005, WACAM's investigations based on complaints of polluted streams by affected communities established that Newmont had a facility that discharged faecal effluents into River Asuopre that served as the drinking stream of many farming communities.
- In November 2006, Newmont officials got five activists of WACAM and an official of Oxfam America arrested by the Police on a framed up charge that the activists used Newmont's name in organising a community meeting.
- The first phase of the Ahafo Mine displaced almost 10,000 landlords and the planned second phase is expected to displace another 10,000.
- Newmont's operations at the Ahafo mine are affecting river bodies in the area. Newmont has constructed a dam on river Subri that is a tributary of river Tano (one of the major rivers in Ghana) for its operations. Two people drowned in the dam and died in 2005.
- On June 6 2006, Military acting on behalf of Newmont brutalised the Ntotroso Community (an affected community) on a peaceful demonstration against Newmont's failed promise of providing employment to the Youth of Ntotroso.

Akyem Project

In January 2006, Newmont purchased its minority partner's share and now owns 100% of the Akyem project. This project would have a greater portion of its active mine pit in the Ajenua Bepo Forest Reserve. Newmont had extended its mining operations to the Akyem area where it is seeking an environmental permit to set up a mine which would establish a huge pit with length of 2.5km, width of 0.9km and depth of about 0.5km. The Ghana News Agency reported that the Police killed one farmer and injured three others at New Abirem in the Birim North

District of Eastern Region on November 2, when the Police went in defence of Newmont against community people who embarked on public protest for fair and adequate compensation.

In February 2008, 215 farmers from communities who would be affected by the Akyem mine sent a petition to the Minister responsible for Lands, Forestry and Mines.

In 2008, 6,000 non-governmental organisations and individuals from 50 countries signed a petition to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Ghana not to grant permit for the Akyem mine to avoid the destruction of the Ajenua Bepo Forest Reserve. The EPA asked Newmont to revise its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Independent consultants commissioned by civil society organisations to review the EIS indicated that the proposed Akyem mine would have severe impacts and that the DEIS is inadequate. According to the review, the Akyem mine would, among other impacts, cause:

- destruction of approximately 70 ha of forest in the protected Ajenua Bepo Forest Reserve (ABFR), or about one quarter of forest remaining in the Reserve
- destruction of about three quarters of forest patches between the nearest borders of ABFR and the Mamang River Forest Reserve;
- destruction of known or presumed habitat for at least 15 vulnerable and one endangered species of plant;
- destruction of known or presumed habitat of at least two Endangered species, two Vulnerable species, and many Near Threatened species of vertebrates;
- risks of acid mine drainage and toxic metals contamination from waste materials totalling 15 million tons;
- cyanide contamination concerns from inadequately treated cyanide effluents and inadequate liner for tailings facility; and
- social concerns including displacement of over 1,000 people, impacts on local livelihoods, and destruction or removal of at least 18 sacred or heritage sites including royal burial sites.

The DEIS, among other problems, fails to:

- adequately and accurately assess the impacts of the project on ecosystem functions, habitat and forest cover, and species of conservation concern;
- present adequate plans for managing, monitoring, and mitigating biodiversity threats;
- demonstrate adequate sampling for acid-generation potential of ore and waste;
- present adequate plans for lining the tailings facility and destroying cyanide, limiting erosion of overburden as well as mine reclamation bonding, and resumption of farming.

According to Utah Phillips, “The Earth is not dying - it is being killed. And the people killing it have names and addresses.” Without doubt Newmont is one of the companies contributing to the killing of the earth. Thank you for your interest in the story about corporate wealth and community poverty. It is time to act.