



Policy Brief

**THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF GALAMSEY ON COCOA COMMUNITIES IN THE JUABOSO
DISTRICT OF GHANA**

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INTRODUCTION

Illegal mining also known as *galamsey*, has proliferated across the length and breadth of Ghana and several communities have borne the brunt. Indeed, the socio-economic and environmental costs of *galamsey* on host communities in particular and the entire nation by extension are palpable. *Galamsey* or illegal mining has been concentrated traditionally in notable mining areas in Ghana such as Tarkwa, Akwatia, and Obuasi, among several others. Nonetheless, the discovery of minerals, especially gold, on previously non-mineral lands, has also engendered *galamsey* activities in these geographical areas. The interplay between *galamsey* and cocoa production and the impact of the former on cocoa communities is an interesting subject but not widely documented. It is worth stressing that the discovery of gold in cocoa growing areas is affecting the socio-economic and environmental fabrics of these societies.

Juaboso District in the Western Region is one of Ghana's cocoa producing districts that have been hit hard by *galamsey* activities. The mainstay of the district's economy is agriculture and , forestry¹ and cocoa production is one of the significant agricultural activities in the district. Nevertheless, *galamsey* activities, especially are rife in the district culminating in serious livelihood implications and human security threats meted out to host communities.

The purpose of this policy brief is to highlight the consequences of *galamsey* operation on cocoa communities while making recommendations for policy decisions. This paper focuses mainly on Mantukwa community because of the gravity of the impact of *galamsey* on this community. The paper, however, draws minimally on the social fabric effect of *galamsey* in Danyame, another community in the district whose youth are moving into the Mantukwa community because of *Galamsey* operations. Moreover, while these may not be the only 'galamsey' communities, they are deliberately chosen because they are beneficiary communities of the Cocoa Life Programme that the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) is jointly implementing with other stakeholders such as World Vision Ghana, Right to Play, and Abantu for Development.

GALAMSEY OPERATORS IN MANTUKWA COMMUNITY (JUABOSO DISTRICT)

The main *galamsey* operators in the Juaboso district, with particular reference to Mantukwa community, are foreigners who have been operating in the community for the past two years. It must be emphasized here that these foreigners – apart from allegedly securing mineral rights from the government through the Minerals Commission and also paying semblance of royalties to the paramount chiefs of a traditional area – further make significant monetary payment to the ordinary cocoa farmer whose farm land would be used for mining.² It is estimated that about GHS 270,000 is paid by foreign *galamsey* operators for every hectare of land.³ Although the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government, as part of its anti-*galamsey* policy since assumption of power in January 2017, has been able to clamp down on *galamsey* operators in Mantukwa and its environs, the damages

¹ See Ghana Statistical Service (2014). 2010 Population and Housing Census. District Analytical Report, Juaboso.

² Fieldwork conducted in June, 2017

³ Fieldwork conducted in June, 2017

already caused are enormous and communities are suffering from the enervating effects of post-*galamsey* activities.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF GALAMSEY ON COCOA COMMUNITIES?

Galamsey or illegal mining has affected cocoa communities in several ‘negative ways’, thereby underscoring the need for concerted and conscious policy decisions to manage, if not completely deal with, the menace. A broad spectrum of physical, social, psychological and economic consequences of *galamsey* are meted out to the residents of Mantukwa.

Death Threats

Like other mining communities in Ghana, dredges of *galamsey* in Mantukwa have not been filled and a number of them are now dammed threatening the very lives of the residents. It is reported that some of the residents of this community, have already lost their lives to these dredges. Two individuals slipped into these dredges and got drowned when they had gone to the mining site in search of gold following the clamp down on the *galamsey* operators. The third individual, however, met his untimely death when he slipped into one of the dredges while returning home from his cocoa farm.⁴ These unfortunate and untimely deaths would not have happened without *galamsey* activities and obviously these incidences have their own socio-psychological and physical impact on the community at large and the dependents or relatives of these individuals in particular.

It is worrying following the clamp down on miners, no conscious or concerted effort has been taken either by the District Assembly or the central government to reclaim the abandoned site for its original agricultural purpose and thus end the death threats associated with these dredges.

Health Impact

The health impact of *galamsey* in Mantukwa community is disturbing. According to reports from the community members, the stagnant waters in the dredges are breeding mosquitos and therefore inflicting many individuals with the malaria virus. Malaria has, allegedly, become the prevalent sickness in the community.⁵

The proliferation of mosquitos in the community and the subsequent outbreak of malaria is a very disturbing situation that is having a serious toll on the health and incomes of families in this community. An eighteen-year old lady lost her baby at birth because of mother-to-child transfer of malaria virus. Another critical case is that of a seven-year old girl, who was infested with a disease that doctors at Proso-Kofikrom Seventh Day Adventist hospital were unable to diagnose. This ailment is the direct result of water that she drunk from polluted river Boizan which in itself got polluted by *galamsey* operation. This river has, since time immemorial, been the drinking water source for residents in this community. Therefore, its diversion and pollution by *galamsey* operators render this community highly vulnerable.

⁴ Fieldwork conducted in June, 2017

⁵ Fieldwork conducted in June, 2017

The outbreak of malaria and other sicknesses do have some impact on the health budget of residents whose incomes are already very limited. The overall quality of the living standards is therefore affected

Impact on Cocoa Production

Apart from the foregoing effects, *galamsey* operation has also hit hard on cocoa production. Cocoa production in this community dwindled significantly. A Purchasing Clerk (PC) interviewed during fieldwork in Mantukwa in June, 2017 claimed that in the 2014/15 crop year, he bought 800 bags of cocoa while he was able to purchase a paltry 590 bags in the 2015/16 crop year, a significant shortfall. In the Mantukwa community, *galamsey* operation has obviously culminated in the destruction of large swathes of cocoa farm lands and therefore affects cocoa yields.

Impact on Education

The effect of *galamsey* on the education of children in Mantukwa community is appalling. Rather than attend classes, majority of the primary and Junior High School students instead frequent the abandoned fields in search of gold neglecting the life-threatening dangers and risks on these fields. Although authorities and parents have attempted to stop these untoward behaviours by the children, it is difficult to prevent them from going to the abandoned ‘gold fields.’ Not only has the advent of *galamsey* disrupted the education of pupils in the early stages of their lives, which is a very important education stage, but also the children are also risking their lives in the name of gold, which entails implementing measures to address the situation.

Effect on Societal Fabric

One common trait of all mineral communities is the influx of foreigners into these communities. Community members are too often startled at the mere presence of foreigners.⁶ Moreover, the foreigners, have also introduced jackpots in other surrounding communities such as which are not only a major source of conflict between and among individuals but have also disrupted the education of the youth and children. Although there are no estimates of the numbers of youths and children involved, anecdotal evidence however points to a significant number. These youth and children would rather spend their time at the jackpot centres than in school because of the quest for money. Nonetheless, given the winner-takes-all nature of this gambling game, it is reported that this game is currently the major cause of conflict and violence and therefore eroding the very social fabric of these communities. Jackpots related conflicts have occurred in Danyame and neighbouring communities such as Sayarano and Asafo.⁷

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the challenges meted out to cocoa communities in the Juaboso District, policy makers, and CSO actors would find the following recommendations quite useful:

⁶ Fieldwork conducted in June, 2017

⁷ Fieldwork conducted in June, 2017

- a. The reclamation of the land is the most pressing need of residents of Mantukwa community currently. The land reclamation would likely reduce the outbreak of mosquitos and spread of malaria. It would also inevitably keep children in school since there would be no motivation for them to go onto a reclaimed land in search of gold. Land reclamation has the potential of increasing cocoa yields provided the reclaimed land would be suitable for agricultural purposes.
- b. Given the proliferation of mosquitos in the community, it would be helpful that the government and NGOs coordinate their efforts with the District Assembly to distribute free mosquito nets and other mosquito repellent to residents of this community. It may even suffice for the whole site breeding mosquitos to be mass-sprayed.
- c. The Government of Ghana (GoG) must clamp down on jackpots businesses in the communities mentioned in particular and the District as a whole. It is alleged that these businesses are registered businesses. If this is the case, then the GoG may find it useful to revise its laws to criminalize any jackpot business in the country and thus save some of these communities from unnecessary skirmishes that have the potential of escalating into full-blown conflicts