
[Ghana: Newmont mining urged to cancel new plans](#)

On last April 27, an international team of representatives including from the Ghanaian Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) called on Newmont Mining, the world's largest gold producer, to urgently reform its human rights and environmental practices at its global operations and to permanently cancel plans for new, open-pit mines on densely populated farmland in Ghanaian forest reserves, in Romania, and on a mountain in Peru that is a source of community drinking water.

"Although we come from five different continents, we share many similar experiences with Newmont's operations. We also share similar demands: we ask that the company stop polluting our oceans and freshwater with mining waste, stay out of our protected forests, and that it only mine with the informed consent of communities," said Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, of WACAM.

Speaking at the company's annual shareholders meeting, representatives also from Indonesia, Peru, Romania, and Nevada demanded that Newmont fully respect human rights, stop intimidation of farmers, community members and individuals critical of its operations, and stop dumping mine wastes into the ocean.

Newmont has big plans in Ghana, which will be the fifth major centre with two advanced exploration projects, the Ahafo and Akyem projects, that led to the company's entry into Africa and are the newest additions to its global operations.

The Ahafo project is located in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana which has twenty Forest Reserves covering a total area of 233,469 hectares. The project area is some 300 kilometres northwest of Accra between the towns of Kenyase and Ntotoroso. As currently designed, the project will implement open pit mine operations. For it to be accomplished some 500 families -3,000 villagers- in the Ahafo region of Ghana, are being displaced from their homes to make way for large industrial gold mines owned by Newmont and its partners.

The Akyem project is located in the eastern region, 130 kilometres northwest of Accra between the towns of New Abirem and Ntronang. It covers a forest reserve area that is home to rare species of plants and animals.

In 2004, the National Coalition of Civil Society Groups Against Mining in Ghana's Forest Reserves had made a presentation to the Ghanaian media to present their stand against the government's decision to open up the country's remaining forest reserves to mining. They argued that "the net return of mineral wealth despite the significant foreign inflow into the sector is very doubtful viewed against environmental destruction, the level of offshore retention, human rights violations, and the limited access large-scale surface mining offer to community livelihood. Given the inadequacy of the national policy framework to address these issues we as a nation are recording net losses in the mining sector".

The Coalition, formed by several organizations including WACAM, Third World Network-Africa (TWN-

Africa), Centre for Public Interest Law (CEPIL), Friends of the Earth-Ghana (FOE-Ghana), League of Environmental Journalist, Food First International and Action Network (FIAN), had stressed that “We believe that the country’s natural resources are relevant only when they are used for the benefit of its people. Government has the responsibility through national and international laws to ensure that extractive activity serves this purpose. On no account must extractive activity be carried out in a manner that subordinates the people’s livelihoods, dignity, and the diversity of the environment to that of corporate interest”.

Article based on information from: “Communities Urge Gold Miner Newmont to Reform”, Indonesian Forum for Environment (WALHI) and Friends of the Earth Indonesia, 27 Apr 2005, http://www.eng.walhi.or.id/kampanye/tambang/buanglimbah/050427_urge_nmr-agm_mr/; “National Coalition Of Civil Society Groups Against Mining In Ghana’s Forest Reserves, a presentation to the Ghanaian media”, 2004, http://www.bicusa.org/bicusa/issues/Coalition_press_statement_March04.pdf