

Govt initiates programme to promote sustainable mining

By Doreen Andoh, ACCRA

THE government has rolled out a training programme in mining for selected small-scale miners and journalists to promote sustainable mining.

The initiative forms part of national interventions to end illegal mining (galamsey) through a holistic approach, instead of force.

It would take the form of a sandwich programme to be offered by the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Tarkwa on a rolling basis.

Fifty small-scale miners and 25 journalists have been selected for the first phase of the training programme slated for July 20 to August 31, 2017.

The entire programme is targeting 1,000 beneficiaries at a cost of GH¢500,000.

Press briefing

Briefing journalists on some interventions the government was putting in place to enhance the national fight against galamsey in Accra yesterday, the Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Professor Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng, said the government would use dialogue, not force, in the early stages of the fight against galamsey.

For small-scale miners, he said, the training would build their capacity to enable them to undertake their activities in a responsible manner that would not hurt the environment.

He said it was the ministry's expectation that the beneficiaries would become trainers of trainers on sustainable mining.

Describing the media as a very important partner in the fight to eliminate illegal mining, Prof. Frimpong-Boateng explained that the media were included in the programme to enhance their knowledge on

the kind of sustainable mining the government was advocating and what it defined as illegality to enhance media reportage.

"Not all small-scale miners are mining the wrong way, just as not all large-scale miners are mining the right way. Therefore, we need to include the media, so that they know who is doing it right or wrong, irrespective of the kind of mining a person or an institution is into," he said.

Mercury importation

The minister hinted that as part of the government's decision to promote sustainable mining, the ministerial committee on illegal mining was discussing the banning of mercury importation, as mercury was the major chemical illegal minerals used in the processing of gold and which had polluted most of the country's water bodies.

He said discussions on the ban were ongoing and it was likely to take effect by the close of this year.

"This is why the training programme is focusing on mining without mercury, a proven innovation by UMaT," he explained.

Prof. Frimpong-Boateng reiterated that the government was not against mining but was advocating sustainable mining to ensure that the environment was protected for generations unborn.

Asked if the government would listen to the plea of the Association of Small Scale Miners and lift the ban on small-scale mining, he explained that the government would not be in a rush to lift the ban, adding: "The ban was placed for a reason and until the objectives have been met, it cannot be lifted."

The government imposed a six-month ban on small-scale mining in April as part of efforts to end illegal mining and its degrading effects on the environment and announced that the ban could extend even

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beyond six months if the objectives for its imposition were not achieved after the six months.

Media coalition against galamsey

Making a contribution on behalf of the Media Coalition against Galamsey, the Managing Director of the New Times Corporation, Mrs Carole Annang, commended President Akufo-Addo and his team for demonstrating so much courage and political determination to end galamsey, regardless of its consequences.

She also expressed gratitude to the government for including the media in the training programme because it would enhance reportage on the subject.

Mrs Annang assured the government of the coalition's support in the fight against galamsey and added that as the voice of the voiceless, the media would not relent on their effort until galamsey was completely rooted out.

That, she said, would mean holding all stakeholders, particularly the government, to account.

Small-scale Miners Association

For his part, the Secretary of the Small-scale Miners Association, Mr Godwin

Armah, expressed gratitude to the government for giving small-scale miners the opportunity to learn sustainable mining technologies, as well as including them in the fight against galamsey.

He promised the government of the association's continued support and pleaded that the ban on small-scale mining be lifted to enable the members to go back to work.

Mr Armah also called on the government to deploy the Navy to reinforce the task force created by the association to patrol water bodies, the major operational areas of the galamsey operators.

He said so far the task force had helped in impounding more than 3,000 dredgers and arrested 300 illegal miners.

He expressed optimism that with the help of the Navy, the task force would do more.



• Professor Kwabena Frimpong Boateng addressing the press on the new anti galamsey initiatives in Accra. With him are Mr Godwin Amah, Secretary of the Ghana National Association of Small Scale Miners, and Ms Carol Annang, Member of Media Coalition On Galamsey. Picture: EMMANUEL QUAYE

Writer's email
[doreen.andoh@
graphic.com.gh](mailto:doreen.andoh@graphic.com.gh)