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Scenery

The Country's Natural Resources Are Nature's Gift To Us What We Make Of Them Are Our Gift To Posterity

Diamond Mining
And
Human Development
In
Kono District

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It could be of great advantage to have the organization's presence in the district particularly in the district headquarter town of Koidu so that a concerted effort could be made together with other organizations already present to address the Human Rights and environmental issues.
- 1.2 Green Scenery and other environmental NGOs (ENGOS) should target school children and youth groups for sensitization on environment issues particularly with regards reclaiming of land for agricultural purposes, planting of trees and protection of animals in the forests and waters. There is need for education on the conservation and protection of forests, underground aquifers and fresh water.
- 1.3 The Kimberlite mining is having adverse effect on the environment particularly the destruction of the landscape and underground aquifers by deep blasting. The vibration affects dwelling houses as well as plants and animals on land. The land thus destroyed can hardly be reclaimed for especially agricultural purposes. There is need for thorough lobbying of the National Government on the effects of such mining particularly in towns as it is now happening in Tankoro chiefdom, Koidu.
- 1.4 Government should develop policies on Kimberlite mining or upgrade current mining policies including the inclusion of Kimberlite mining.
- 1.5 Establishment of environmental clubs in schools especially in the district headquarter town of Koidu is of utmost importance
- 1.6 Green Scenery and other ENGOS should organize awareness raising programs on environmental issues targeting women and youth groups present in the district.
- 1.7 Human Right Education programs should be organize in schools, communities and organizations to inform the people adequately about their basic rights and their relationship with the environment.
- 1.8 A forum/meeting involving stakeholders in the mining industry especially the Kimberlite mining industry should be encouraged by the local authority and government to discuss the various human rights and environmental issues already at stake within the district.
- 1.9 To encourage NGOs, or ENGOS and the National government to provide skills training and vocational centers that will attract youths especially young girls, as a means of withdrawing them from the mining industry and further engage them in positive and sustainable means of livelihood.
- 1.10 Since the mining district is a cultural pot, it is prone to constant conflict due to clash in cultures. Also conflicts abound from a host of activities including land ownership. Therefore the organization should work towards putting in place conflict resolution or disputes management program for that area.
- 1.11 Strict environmental monitoring procedure should be put in place by government and funds meant for the purpose of rehabilitating mined out areas must be exposed for accessing by Environmental organizations to undertake rehabilitation work.
- 1.12 Government should prioritize the availability of education in every form including adult literacy in the district.
- 1.13 The issue of child miners must be addressed by government and government should sign and ratify the ILO Convention C182.
- 1.14 Road networks within the district and to the district should be improved
- 1.15 Health centers, hospitals and other health delivery facilities must be improved
- 1.16 HIV/AIDS education and awareness raising programs needs stepping up

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Green Scenery's recent country strategic plan, alleviating human suffering and promoting just development is reaffirmed in the outline of programs derived from the organization's strategic choices of peace; governance; and human rights, livelihoods, and environment. With the organization's strategic goal "poor and marginalized people in disadvantaged communities of Sierra Leone will experience reduced levels of poverty and inequalities in access to resources and opportunities" it is necessary to put in place processes that will actualize this goal.

One key approach in implementing our programs is advocacy either for policy or behavior change. Research thus form part of the process in developing the tools for advocacy. Green Scenery has therefore established a publication titled POLICY PAPER SERIES, which will be looking into a broad range of issues on policy matters as they affect the organization's work.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The five-day research is an outcome of a rapid assessment of situation in Koidu, Kono in April 2004 by Green Scenery. In partnership with other organizations within the National Forum coalition, Green Scenery formed part of the research team to investigate mining as it affects the organization's intervention areas with the view of providing insights as to the measures to be taken to provide possible solutions as well as proffer recommendations for government and other interested bodies.

3.0 STRATEGY

The research was carried out through consultations, visit to mining sites, discussion with various stakeholders in the mining industry in Kono including traditional leaders, mining company authorities, government officials, youths and women's groups, Non governmental organizations and private citizens especially the members of the affected community of the Kimberlite mining area in Tankoro chiefdom. In order to have an over view of the impact of mining in the district the team visited chiefdom headquarter towns in Sandoh, Nimiyama, Tankoro, Gbense and Fiamia chiefdoms. Issues to be investigated were categorized under the following headings.

- a. Human Rights
 - i. Women and children's right
 - ii. Discrimination
 - iii. Domestic violence
 - iv. Sexual and related offences
 - v. Kimberlite mining

- b. Health and sanitation
 - i. Available medical facilities
 - ii. Prevalent diseases
 - iii. Sanitary condition
 - iv. Health care facilities

- c. Education
 - i. Available educational partialities
 - ii. Educational needs
 - iii. Ratio of pupils to teachers in schools
 - iv. Attraction of school going children to the mining pits

- d. Environment
 - i. Housing and accommodation
 - ii. Deforestation
 - iii. Erosion and degradation of land
 - iv. Pollution – water, air

- e. Social problems/factors
 - i. Immigration
 - ii. Crimes
 - iii. Drug abuse

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Human Rights

One precarious human rights situation is that of child mining. A huge number of children estimated at some 9000 between the ages of ten and seventeen are found in the mining pits. This development saw the establishment of a task force comprising child protection agencies and under the District Social Development Officer with the aim of working on coordinated responses on child miners. The response has urged organizations such as International Rescue Committee (IRC), CARE, Action aid and Women organizations like Kuyadondonya Women’s Association to engage in instant educational programs to help withdraw the children from the mining pits to schools and skills training centers.

Women are also engaged in illicit mining as a means of sustenance. Mining areas are apportioned inequitably to women leaving the rich areas to men only, sometimes under the guise of secret society laws.

The women are discriminated against in holding political leadership positions such as belonging to the District Council. Women contestants in the last District Council election were forced to withdraw their candidature in certain chiefdoms.

Early marriages are very much prevalent in the district as a result of the influence of the mining activities. Boys as young as seventeen or even below are married to girls as young as fifteen years. Teenage pregnancy is another prevalent issue. Some of the teenage marriages are forced marriages due to poverty in the home. Rape and other sexual offences are reportedly not high but prostitution rate is very high. Domestic violence is common occurrence with cases of such nature frequently reported in the police. In the remote areas it is hardly reported.

There were reported cases of gross violation of human rights by security and police personnel, such as unlawful detentions, intimidation and assault by security personnel on civilians. Incidents of this nature were witnessed by the team particularly in Tankoro chiefdom where the Kimberlite mining is taking place. Similar incident was reported by this organization in its rapid assessment.

The life of the people inhabiting the Kimberlite mining area is one of total misery. They are perpetually harassed out of their homes whenever the mine blasting is taking place. No provision had been made for their relocation even though that was a precondition before the mining could have commenced. School children are whisked out of school during the blast. People run out of their homes leaving them at the mercy of thieves who sometimes make away with their belongings. There is no protection from both local and national authorities and the company officials. Even the workers such as security personnel are not protected from the mining blast. Houses have often been destroyed and there was an incident of a death from of the fragment of the blast in the chiefdom.

Women and children are the most affected as they are often found in the town while men go to mining pits in surrounding towns. The people are highly traumatized as the blasting keeps them in perpetual fear of their lives every week. No proper arrangement had been made for compensation to the affected people nor has any proper provision been made for their relocation to an ideal place. The company cast the blame on the government of Sierra Leone and the local authorities. The vibration from the blast is virtually causing great suck to the people and the entire environment destroying under ground structures such as the bedrocks and other underground aquifers.

4.2. Health and sanitation

The entire district is very poor in health and sanitary facilities to meet the health needs of the people particularly in the villages away from the headquarter towns. Even in the district headquarter town of Koidu, medical facilities are inadequate with very few private health centers and an ill-equipped hospital. There is very poor sanitary condition with dug out pits infected with mosquitoes, bacteria and other vectors, found in the towns and villages and even near homes. Thus there is prevalence of malaria, at times cholera, and diarrhea. Mining activities such as diving, deep pit mining have left people blind, deaf, and disfigured. There were reports of chronic pains, pneumonia and sexually transmitted infections. Essential drugs to address the health needs are inadequate and available ones are expensive. However, non-governmental organizations such as Merlin, Medicine San Frontier (MSF) are engaged in health care services in the district.

Lack of good drinking water particularly in major mining towns is a major problem. All the streams and rivers are heavily affected by mining such that they are hardly drinkable.

The population largely depends on water wells and few can afford the portable water sold in shops. There is no tap or pipe borne water.

4.3 Education

The worst affected area of life in the district is education. This has a long history dating as far back as 1930 when mining was first introduced in the district. Since that time on to the war period, the people of the district put premium on mining than education. School going children were denied schooling for the mining pits. The girl child was discriminated against by not allowing her to go to school amongst the few who were sent to school. Thus education is at low ebb in the district. Even after the war when the attitude of the people seems to have changed in favor of education, the lack of educational facilities such as infrastructure for schools, learning equipment and conducive and encouraging environment for both schooling and working conditions of service, are making education still wanton in the district. The few schools are now highly populated with children but there are no trained and qualified teachers. A school of about eight hundred pupils have only one salaried teacher. Parents are compelled to voluntarily contribute to pay the temporary teachers to teach their children. Girl child education is still a problem. The few that go to school often drop out due to early pregnancy. Sex education and other sanitization programs on such issues are hardly organized to help ameliorate these problems.

The unavailability of tertiary institutions such as teacher training colleges compounds the problems. Vocational institutions for technical education are to a large extent unavailable with only two starting now in the township of Koidu. The most lauded SABABU Education program is hardly visible in the district.

4.4. Environment

The mining industry has adversely affected the entire environment of the district over the years to an extent that the entire district is in an environmental crisis involving major degradation of the land and health risk due to congestion of dwelling houses. The war had a devastating impact on towns and villages of Kono as majority of the homes were either destroyed or left to dilapidate. Very few of the houses have been repaired and habited. The lack of adequate housing has created

congestion in the homes with an average of about 10 persons to a single room or thirty persons to a household.

The mining activities have greatly affected the environment causing great biodiversity loss. Valuable forest trees have been destroyed causing the animals to migrate into areas of less threat or go into extinction. Leopards, lions, elephants, which had been present in the district, can no longer be seen. Even the vegetation for smaller animals has been destroyed causing them to migrate to other areas in search of habitat. There is constant drainage of underground aquifers and running streams are highly polluted. Aquatic plants and animals have been destroyed by mining activities. Sea animals and fishes have migrated to fresh water areas, as the waters are always kept turbid due to mining activities. Water from wells is often found to contain very high levels of iron substances which adversely affect the health of people.

Heritage sites, such as ancient caves, secret society shrines (sacred groves), have all been destroyed along with all forms of biodiversity. Arable land for agricultural purpose has been destroyed together with agricultural crops and economic trees forcing farming communities into hostile alternative livelihoods.

Deforestation is at its highest and has affected the local climate making rainfall pattern very unusual thus affecting the growth of farm crops. Farming population have diminished with a large percentage moving into mining areas and hence changing their livelihood patterns, while the lesser percentage have migrated to areas of fertile lands. The attendant problems to such human movement that are being experienced are, scarcity of food, congestion from lack of housing; poor health and sanitation; rampant illicit mining, and high crime rate. Land destroyed by rampant illicit mining activities has not been reclaimed to undertake agricultural and other non mining activities on them. The entire land topography in most of the mining areas has been grossly distorted due to constant erosion.

Mining activities have been carried out in towns leading to destruction of dwelling houses. Some houses have pits dug underneath them endangering the lives of the inhabitants. There was an instance when a two storey dwelling houses got sunk in a dug pit underneath. The roads have been rendered unmotorable the few motorable ones are in deplorable conditions. This has made other economic activities such as trade particularly in local foodstuffs and other commodities, virtually impossible or very burdensome. People are highly dependent on imported items from other parts of the country and foreign countries. The water dam in the district had been destroyed by the mining activities making safe drinking water hard to come by.

4.5 **Other social issues**

Apart from the above, other social issues considered were those of immigration, crime, drug abuse, and culture conflicts. The mining activities in the district have attracted a lot of immigrants both local as well as international to an extent that the district is more of a cosmopolitan district than a Kono district. There had been an influx of different tribes from different parts of the country and foreigners from different nations. This has led to the emergence of a multiplicity of cultures and behaviours. There have been clashes in the different cultural practices.

Traditional authorities such as local chiefs have often abandoned their responsibilities for the mining pits. Crime rate in the mining areas of the district is higher than in non-mining areas. Crimes such as larceny, murder, wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, or with intent to cause bodily harm, rape, indecent assault, indecent exposures, and other social crimes like prostitution, vagrancy, use of obscene language are prevalent. The issue of drug could be tied with crime, as most of the criminals are often drug infected. There is a high presence of drug and drug abusers in the district. Miners as well as traders are involved in the use of drugs ranging from tobacco to cocaine. Children as well as adults are involved in the abuse of these drugs.

5.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research time on a whole was very short taking into consideration the enormous impact of mining on the sectors covered by this report in the entire district. Only five out of fourteen chiefdoms were visited. It is recommended that an intensive research be made looking at the impact of mining in the entire district so as to come up with concrete recommendations with regards steps to be taken to address the issues. This step by Green Scenery can be referred to as a further assessment survey.

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