

Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND)



With support from



Presents

Youth Report on 2013 World Water Day Event

Protecting Our Water bodies from Pollution: A Petition by the Youth of Nwinso Community in the Birim North District of the Eastern Region - Ghana

The only water body that flows through Nwinso Community has been badly polluted by the activities of Illegal miners commonly referred to as Galamsey. Ironically, though most of the youth are engaged in this practice as their main source of livelihood they were quick to add that whiles they mine on land, some foreigners work directly in the river thus they (foreigners) are largely responsible for the water pollution. All efforts by the youth to get local government to help streamline their work appropriately and stop direct mining in the river have proven futile. There is a looming danger such as outbreak of diseases and total environmental degradation if quick and efficient steps are not taken.

The youth on World Water Day presented their petition to the District Chief Executive (DCE) requesting for speedy and lasting solutions.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly designated 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation to draw global attention to the benefits of cooperation in water management.

The designation is expected to highlight successful examples of water cooperation and explore key issues including water diplomacy, transboundary water management and financial cooperation. It is also in recognition of the importance of water as critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and the eradication of poverty and hunger, and as an indispensable resource for human health and well-being.

Against this background, the **Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND)** was tasked by **WaterAid Ghana** to support the celebration of World Water Day at Nwinso Community of Birim North District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The event was organized by ORAP with financial and technical support from WaterAid Ghana and HSBC.

SYND was mandated to:

1. Assist ORAP in ensuring a successful celebration of the event in the community.
2. Dialogue with the youth of the community to assess their strengths and weaknesses and possibly identify gaps in dealing with the current problem of water pollution then make recommendations where necessary.

This report therefore is skewed specifically towards the work of SYND in the community during the World Water Day celebration.

PRE-EVENT CONSULTATIVE MEETING

The Executive Coordinator of SYND, Chibeze Ezekiel visited Nwinso community a day before the event, that is, Thursday 21st March 2013 to dialogue with the youth groups. The main exercise was to obtain first-hand information about the current water situation in the community.



Key issues raised by the youth were that:

- Whiles they mine on the land, foreigners mine directly in the river thus polluting the water body.
- The community has expanded due to influx of more people working as illegal miners (galamsey) thus bringing pressure on the three (3) boreholes available. It therefore takes long hours of queuing to be able to access water.
- They believe the chief and elders are protecting the foreigners. Any attempt by the youth to stop them results in the youth rather been arrested by the police. Due to the insensitivity of their Chief to their plights, they have decided to boycott any event or activity in the community.

- The river overflows its banks and parts of the community when the rains descend thus making commuting to and from the community very difficult. Thus, they are compelled to engage the services of canoe operators at a fee.
- There must be alternative means of employment or livelihood besides the illegal mining practices so as to reduce land degradation considerably.
- The activities of illegal miners should be streamlined to help proper management of resources and the environment
- A bigger bridge is needed as the current one is always submerged anytime the rains come.

MAIN EVENT SUMMARY

1. Prior to the commencement of the event, school pupils marched to the palace of the Chief to officially invite him and his elders to the event grounds.



2. There was a route march by the pupils and youth groups carrying placards with various inscriptions such as *'Protect our water sources from pollution; Government must fund WASH; Women spend 40 billion hours for Water; and Say no to Galamsey'*



3. Mr. Bernard Ahiadeke, Programmes Manager of ORAP in his speech did mention among other things that cooperation is very important in any endeavor if many people are engaged in any activity for their mutual benefit. With good cooperation, community members can use water efficiently. With cooperation, local government authorities can work with stakeholders to provide water to people under their jurisdiction. He further noted that, our forefathers

depended solely on fresh water bodies for all their activities including drinking. But the situation has changed due to environmental pollution by human activities.



4. In a speech read on behalf of Hon. Mavis Ama Frimpongmah (District Chief Executive for Birim North District, New Ebrim), Mrs. Kate Anna Mensah noted that the role of traditional authority and youth associations in protecting our water bodies from pollution is crucial. She further indicated that people must undertake their income generating activities with great respect and concern for the environment and water bodies. The rivers, dams and other in-take points for production, transmission and distribution of water to end users and consumers must be protected and preserved with all seriousness. She gave the assurance that both national government and our local Assembly are concerned about the level of environmental degradation and pollution of water bodies, and will not hesitate to apply the law on offenders. She acknowledged the support of ORAP, WaterAid and other stakeholders operating in the District through the provision of basic social services such as water and sanitation services.



5. There was also a dance performance by a section of the school pupils

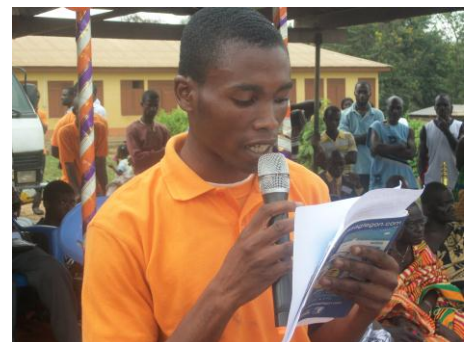


YOUTH PETITION

PETITION BY YOUTH OF NWINSO TO THE BIRIM NORTH DISTRICT:

We the youth of Nwinso led by the Royal (Adehye) youth club petition the Birim North District Assembly on the occasion of World Water Day Celebration. We make these six point presentation:

1. Galamsey is polluting our water sources; government must do something about it.
2. Perennial flooding as a result of mining activities along the Nwin river must be checked to safe guard our lives and farms
3. The future of the youth is bleak as all freshwater will be silted if nothing is done about it
4. Government must find jobs for the youth or modernize galamsey and provide technical assistance to save lives and protect our environment
5. The use of chemicals in the operations pollute the water we use in our day to day activities and threatens aquatic lives
6. More underground water sources (eg mechanized



boreholes) must be provided for the community to save us from drinking from polluted rivers and streams

DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES RESPONSE TO YOUTH PETITION

In response to the youth petition, the Representative from the District Assembly indicated that:

1. The District Security Council is currently discussing ways of dealing with the illegal miners especially those who mine directly in the water bodies.
2. Galamsey operators have been informed to register and form an association for easy dialogue or engagement with government and other stakeholders.
3. District Assembly has signed a bond with ORAP for the provision of mechanized boreholes between April and June 2013.



POST EVENT CONSULTATION WITH YOUTH: WAY FORWARDED

At the post briefing session with the youth of the community after the event, it was concluded that:

1. All galamsey stakeholders, that is, machine operators, buyers and workers must register by the end of April 2013 to kick start an organized association. This will help them have a 'voice' in the community.
2. The Assembly Man of the community who happens to be a member of the youth group also doubles up as a Representative on the District Security Council. It was agreed that he ought to inform or brief the youth on the outcomes of 'security' meetings or deliberations so they (youth) can always be aware of any steps or action been taken and possibly also make inputs in the deliberations.



CONCLUSION

After engaging the youth of Nwinso Community for two days, it was very evident that the youth feel very worried about the rate at which illegal miners are polluting and destroying their water bodies. When given the opportunity, they are willing to support and collaborate with local government to initiate, plan and implements measures to streamline their galamsey business that will safeguard their water bodies from further pollution.

If water indeed is critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and the eradication of poverty and hunger, and as an indispensable resource for human health and well-being then Nwinso Community cannot be said to be heading towards sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that:

1. With the formation of the galamsey association by April 2013, they must be given capacity building such as advocacy and lobbying skills so as to effectively engage with their local authorities and other stakeholders to achieving expected goals or objectives.
2. Awareness creation should be intensified so community dwellers and illegal miners can understand the consequences of their actions and inactions against the environment.
3. Farming or agriculture in the community should be revived as an alternative source of livelihood
4. Institution of incentives and award schemes to young people who practice acceptable norms or procedures in their work.

GALLERY:



The Chief of Nwinso Community



The Chief and some elders of Nwinso



Portia Oppong Baffour of Dream Hunt in a group picture with some youth



Chibeze Ezekiel of SYND admonishing the youth at the event



Galamsey operating machines at Nwinso Community



How the ONLY water body (river) has been POLLUTED by illegal miners

*More of the event pictures can be found on our facebook page:
www.facebook.com/StrategicYouthNetworkforDevelopment*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I deeply express my profound appreciation to WaterAid Ghana for given me this great opportunity to mark World Water Day as well as engage with the youth of Nwinso Community. I also owe Mr. Evans Sasu Owusu (Operations Manager of ORAP) a great deal for his selfless and tremendous support he offered which made my work very fruitful. The platform he created for me to enter the community and engage the youth was indeed remarkable.

My colleague young and active comrade Miss Portia Oppong Baffour (Director, Dream Hunt Ghana) travelled all the way to join and support me in the community. She provided some hope and inspiration to the women in that they (women) also have a key role to play in finding solutions to the problems as they are most affected.

CONTACT INFO:

Chibeze Ezekiel, Executive Coordinator
Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND)
Mobile #: +233 244 967931
Website: www.strategicyouthnetwork.org
E-mail ad: chibeze@strategicyouthnetwork.org