



PRESS RELEASE

Friends of the Nation to promote livelihood diversification for Youth involved in Small-Scale Mining in Ghana

Sekondi, June 8, 2015 – Friends of the Nation (FoN) is pleased to announce the implementation of a new project to promote livelihood diversification for youth involved in small-scale mining in the Western Region of Ghana. The project will develop recommendations for civil society, government and international donors for the development and implementation of more appropriate policies and programmes. The one-year project is supported by the Australian High Commission under the Direct Aid Program (DAP).

The reasons that individuals become involved in illegal small-scale mining, popularly known as ‘galamsey’, are varied. Poverty and lack of viable economic alternatives in rural areas play a major role. The project therefore seeks to deepen understanding and raise awareness of the factors that drive young people into illegal mining in Ghana. As part of the project activities, FoN will develop a documentary together with the young miners to help them reflect on why they are involved in galamsey. FoN will also facilitate the identification of livelihood options available to poor and vulnerable youth through sensitization workshops and a pilot livelihood enhancement and diversification programme. It will involve training of 80 young men and women to develop a sustainable diversified livelihood scheme.

“Due to the decline of the agriculture sector and other reasons, young people, especially in rural areas, often have few or no alternatives to sustain themselves and their families. They turn to galamsey as they do not see any other viable source of income”, says Donkris Mevuta, Executive Director of Friends of the Nation. “At FoN, we promote ‘diversified livelihoods’ rather than ‘alternative livelihoods’ because you can’t just take people out of a job they have been doing for years overnight. We have to make sure that livelihood programmes are actually of interest to and viable for the young people in these communities.”

The Western Region is known to have high concentration of illegal small-scale mining activities. The situation is of great concern to community members, local government and traditional authorities as ‘galamsey’ is hazardous to young people’s health and wellbeing, involving arduous working conditions, exposure to dangerous substances including mercury, and lack of health and safety protections. It also contributes to environmental degradation. FoN will collaborate with the District Assembly and Traditional Authorities in the area, both of whom have expressed their support for implementation of the project.

Small-scale mining supports the livelihoods of over 1,000,000 people in Ghana. In 2013, it contributed to 34% of Ghana’s gold production. Unfortunately, the vast majority – over 70% – of

small-scale miners in the country operate illegally due to a number of constraints, including lack of access to viable lands, difficulties in the licensing process, and inadequate support services.

Friends of the Nation is socio-environmental advocacy NGO based in the Western Region. FoN operates in the thematic areas of Resource Governance, Population, Health and Environment Education (PHE), Local Governance and Business Advocacy.

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