

# Crisis Management Team, MGN Gold Tackle Chemical Spillover in Bong County

By Gerald C. Koinyeneh - Ge...

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NEWS

**Monrovia** – The Crisis Management Team (CMT) comprising officials from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) and MNG Gold Mines say all is on course to address the chemical spillover at MNG Goldmine in Kokoya, Bong County.

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It can be recalled that on September 27, 2017, an uncontrolled amount of slurry containing cyanide from the company's tailing storage facility (TSF) was discharged into the Sien creek and other nearby wetlands when a section of the geomembrane layer of the tailing storage dam ruptured; resulting in the contamination of ground water (hand Pumps), surface water (Sien Creek) and the disruption of farming activities in some parts of Sigwata Town and along the creek.

In addition 34 persons were admitted at the Phebe Hospital following the incident.

In the wake of the incident, a Crisis Management Team (CMT) comprising of the EPA, the Ministry of Land Mines and Energy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Public Health Institute of Liberia was setup to probe into the situation and work with MNG Gold's management to ensure that the situation is brought under control and relevant actions are adequately taken.

Addressing a group of reporters on Tuesday, October 17, the CMT, headed by the EPA's Deputy Executive Director, Urias S. Goll disclosed that the CMT, following a three-day visit to the area from October 5-7, 2017 discovered that no cyanide was detected in the nearby Sien Creek which had a concentration level of 0.310ppm during the first trip; and all of the six hand pumps were assessed with no indication of cyanide concentration thus no impact to groundwater at the moment.

Compared to the previous assessment, Mr. Goll pointed out that the free cyanide levels have decreased by 44%, from 0.966ppm to 0.540ppm within the TSF; noting that it is acceptable considering the limit is 50 mg/L in TSF according to International Cyanide Management Code.

He revealed that out of the 34 persons hospitalized at Phebe Hospital, only 6 persons required further examination; while the rest have been discharged without any complication, noting the latest medical report from the 6 persons will be released to the public once the doctor submits the details of the examinations.

He added that MNG has in addition provided food items (300 bags of rice, four cartoons of chicken, and three cartoons of beef) and four poly tanks to supply clean and safe water to the community for the month of October.

He added that the EPA and CMT have authorized MNG to take a series of temporary measures to remedy the crisis.

"As temporary measure to remedy this crisis, the EPA and CMT have authorized MNG to take two immediate actions:

MNG will dewater the TSF that holds about 300,000 cubic meters of water under strict compliance with the IFC standards and the Water Quality Guidelines of Liberia.

A third party has been hired to conduct compliance testing and monitoring during the dewatering process.

This dewatering process is intended to assess the full damage of the TSF in order to ensure comprehensive rehabilitation and repair.”

“MNG will construct a mini-dam (TSF) as interim measure to continue operation while the current TSF is being adequately repaired.

The mini dam is already part of the expansion plan developed by MNG for the near-term future.

CMT will again visit the site on the 19th of October, 2017 to continue its investigation,” the EPA Deputy Executive Director added.

Cyanide is a chemical used for extracting gold from ore. This method is used worldwide in compliance with strict global guiding principles including the World Bank/IFC standards and the International Cyanide Code which Liberia has subscribed to.

MNG Gold Liberia incorporated is a Liberia registered Turkish owned Company that acquired a Mineral Development Agreement (MDA) from AmLIB, through the Government of Liberia for its Kokoya concession in 2014.

On January 16, 2017, the EPA issued a “Class A” mining license to the company after it approved an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) conducted for the operation of the Mines and its Tailing Storage Facility.



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