

Kokoyah Residents Want MNG-Gold's MDA Reviewed

By **Marcus Malayea** - September 10, 2019



One of the affected creeks near the MNG Gold mine in Kokoyah, Bong County.

Residents of Kokoyah District in Bong County, where the Turkish Mining Company MNG-Gold is operating, have called for a review of the company's Mineral Development Agreement (MDA), which authorizes the company to operate in the district.

According to local spokespersons Alonso Killinjor and Stephen Sayween, since the company resumed operations in the district, having taken over from the American-Liberian Mining Company (AMLib) in 2013 and begun active mining operations in 2015, it has been operating on the MDA that was signed between the government of former President Charles Taylor and AMLib in 2000.

"We the residents of Kokoyah District are calling for a review of the MDA, because we want to know what is in it, and the contract should meet with present-day reality. Imagine since the MDA was signed in 2000, there has been no evaluation of that instrument," Killinjor and Sayween said.

"In the MDA signed between AMLib and the government, the company contributes US\$12,000 a month or US\$84,000 a year to Bong County Social Development Fund, which amount MNG-Gold is still paying to the county, despite the extraction of huge gold from the district. The quest is what proportion of this amount goes to the communities that are greatly affected as a result of the mining and that of the county," the two spokespersons said.

They said as part of the AMLib and the government's agreement, the company was required to ensure that the lives of locals are protected from chemicals and to provide care for the residents in case of health problems arising from exposure to chemicals. But the two spokespersons said that MNG-Gold is not living up to that contract.

"Can you imagine, MNG-Gold has polluted all of our creeks as a result of the chemicals they used. We are no longer fishing in our creeks as we used to do; we don't bathe in the creeks least to talk about washing clothes there, because of the cyanide chemicals the company disposed of in our creeks," Killinjor and Sayween said.

"We want this government to appraise the current MDA MNG-Gold is using, because what is coming to the residents is very little," they said.

It can be recalled that on September 29, 2017 about 30 persons were admitted at the Phebe Hospital when a reservoir facility containing chemicals belonging to MNG-Gold overflowed with rainwater and later spilled into the nearby Sein Creek, a major water source for residents. The creek was one of several water sources polluted by the MNG-Gold chemical over-spill.

The company through Meryem Tekol Pelenk, Global Health, Safety and Environmental Director, acknowledged the accident and subsequently extended an apology to the locals.

On October 8, 2018 residents also filed a US\$285 million action of damage for wrong against MNG-Gold at the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court in Gbarnga City, Bong County, but the management

denied the allegation, terming it as "false claims."

"Since we filed that lawsuit almost a year ago, we can't get any redress from the court. There is no clinic in Sayeweh Town that the company operates least to talk about roads," Killinjor and Sayween said.

"The affected communities consist of a population of over 1,900 residents who are mostly poor farmers and depend on their immediate environment where they plant food crops for survival. But they are doing no more because of the mining operations," the local spokespersons said.

Share this:



Marcus Malayea