

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Impact of Artisanal Child Mining on the Development of Children in Sierra Leone. A Case Study of Tankoro Chiefdom, Kono District, Sierra Leone.

This research was conducted by the Non-Government Organisation AYME (African Youth on Mining and Environment). Head of this NGO is Joseph Smith. All rights reserved.

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BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH COMMUNITY

Mining in Sierra Leone is an age-old activity; with the discovery of diamonds in the Gbogbora Stream in Nimikoro Chiefdom, Kono District, eastern Sierra Leone, by a colonial Geologist Survey Team which was led by J.D. Pallet. In the 1930s, mining became a renowned economic activity in the country, attracting thousands of people from the country and the sub-region, making up both miners and dealers. Sierra Leone is well celebrated for its high-value diamonds, having discovered a number of special 'stones' in past years. Those include the 969.8-carat stone which was code named '*Star of Sierra Leone*' in 1972, 188- and 283-carat stones in 1996, as well as a 500-carat and a 110-carat stone in 2002.

Tankoro Chiefdom

Tankoro Chiefdom is home to the Kono, an ethnic minority group among 14 others in Kono district, such as well as the Mende, Temne, Kissi, Fullah, and Madingo, in the eastern part of Sierra Leone. It is a diamond-rich chiefdom and is known for its widespread diamond activities. The chiefdom is bordered by Gbense, Nimikoro, Gbaneand Fiama chiefdoms. Although mining is arguably the most viable economic activity in the chiefdom, people are also engaged in trading and agriculture. All settlements visited during the research are actively engaged in mining. Even though this research does not contain specific demographic data about the chiefdom (e.g. the exact number of under eighteen-year-olds in Tankoro), it is apparent that children form a major part of the population.

There is no gender restriction to mining regarding both, men and women. All age groups are allowed to own, as well as support mining activities; men are usually dominating

the appearance. However, women are predominant in businesses that serve to assist, like solving domestic household problems whilst their husbands and children provide most of the labour in the mines.

Definition of Child Miners

As the research focused on the impact of child mining, AYME defined child miner as any person under the age of 18, involved in any form of mining.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The research used Tankoro Chiefdom, Kono District as a case study.

Since the 1930s, Kono has the largest diamond mines in the country. Above that, artisanal mining is very common in this community. Therefore, this community was chosen as the subject of research.

The scope of research covered a total of 16 villages in the Tankoro Chiefdom which were randomly selected and visited by 8 teams of two researchers.

As we use an academic approach to current issues in mining and environment, research is one way to contribute to raise awareness about those topics.

Sample Size

The study targeted a total of 400 respondents (both miners and non-miners), which included:

- Children
- Parents
- Local Authorities
- CSOs
- Government MDAs
- International Development Partners

Data Collection Instruments

- Primary Data:
 - Focus Group Discussions (child miners and non-child miners)
 - Key Informant interviews (stakeholders)
 - Participant observation (community / field observation by data collectors)
- Secondary Data:
 - Document reviews

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The following objectives were the key focus of the study;

- Causes of child mining
- Impacts of child mining
- Existing measures adopted to address child mining in Tankoro Chiefdom
- Recommendations of the study to address child mining

Causes of Child Mining

- **Poverty:** this is the striking center root cause for children's engagement in artisanal mining in the Tankoro Chiefdom.
- **Illiteracy amongst parents:** the illiteracy rates in this community is very high as stated by majority of participants - a good number of parents cannot read and write, thus many of them prefer sending their children to mine or petty trading rather than schooling.
- **Customs:** since the starting of mining in Tankoro it has been a traditional economic activity that is passed on from generation to generation - especially for parents who can't afford to send their kids to school.
- **Personal decision:** Child mining is also developed out of the desire of some children to earn money - which is in return locally appreciated by parents: "we drive money when engaged in mining, so that encourages us more"- (Child Miner)

- **Nature of artisanal mining:** It is very difficult for children to be recruited in large scale mining sectors, as the use of heavy machines is involved. However, it is very simple for them to engage in household- and artisanal mining

Impacts of Child Mining

Child Mining affects children in different ways- thus below are the effects discovered by this study:

Education: Child Miners demonstrate minimal attention to their education/studies, thus impeding educational results. This has led to a high dropout rate from schools in the Tankoro Chiefdom: “Sometimes when I’m in class my attention is on the gravel that people are washing behind me...”

Health: Child Miners suffer from serious health problems such as body pains, severe cold, diarrheal, rash etc.

Violence: Child mining breeds violence in children - although on a minimal scale. They often fight over gravel, mining tools, and in case of an invasion of the mining site by other child miners.

Child Labour: Children’s involvement in mining by every indication constitutes one of the worst forms of child labour, according to Article 3 (d) of the International Labour Organization Convention: “*work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, it is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children*”. Above that, it also violates the child rights convention (CRC).

Sexual harassment or misuse: Respondents opined that child miners are being sexually harassed and misused by adults in these communities.

Child neglect: Children are reported being neglected, especially those who are perceived to have grown up - mostly those who are in their teens.

Malnutrition: A good number of children suffer from malnutrition and other health related problems as a result of deficiencies in diets, coupled with hard labour.

Additional factors: Besides mining, there exist other challenges to the children’s development in Tankoro. Among others, they include:

- Commercial Motor-cycling,
- Relocation of mining communities

Existing Measures for Addressing Child Mining in Tankoro Chiefdom, Kono District

Although there are no clear and specific instruments or mechanisms to address child mining in Tankoro, some efforts are attempted by some key players such as:

- The MSWGCA with some international development partners are making some efforts to enforce both national and international child protection instruments like Child Right Act 2007 and the CRC.
- CSOs and CBOs (NMJD, KoCEPO) have been working to educate parents and the communities about child mining as a crime in the chiefdom

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Efforts to address child mining and its attending problems seems futile due to ineffective measures. Thus, the study proffers the following recommendations;

- Poverty eradication should be prioritized in the Tankoro chiefdom by ensuring a fair value for diamonds and farm products.
- Secondary schools should be established in these communities, so children do not have to walk miles to receive a secondary school education.
- Provision of scholarship schemes for children at primary and secondary school level and an improvement of educational facilities.
- Implementation of robust sensitization which should include human rights education.
- Existing child rights and other regulations that prohibit child labour should be strictly applied by government and local authorities.
- Traditional institutions like paramount chiefs coupled with community involvement should be utilized (some capacity building efforts) to implement the laws against child labour.