**KU GSIS BK21 GLOCOM PROJECT**

**RESEARCH AREA: ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS IN GHANA**

**TOPIC: THE IMPACT OF SMALL SCALE MINING ON WATER QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT IN GHANA**

Water resources, agricultural activities, and all other sectors dependent on clean and potable water are significantly affected by the substantially increased amount of small-scale and illegal mining activities in Ghana.

Mining, which involves extracting naturally occurring minerals from the earth's crust, is considered the world's second oldest and most important industry after agriculture (Amponsah-Tawiah, 2011). In Ghana, the history of mining dates back to the 4th century, with small-scale mining being the main form of mineral exploration when gold was used in diverse ways by indigenous craftsmen (Hayford et al., 2008).

In the past two decades, small-scale mining in Ghana has experienced tremendous growth, with gold as the main mineral extracted in commercial quantity. The industry has contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the country. It has, over the years, created numerous employment, especially in rural areas where there are limited formal sector jobs and paid job opportunities. It is estimated that about 1,000,000 people are directly employed in the small-scale mining industry of Ghana (Hilson, 2009; Kwatia, 2015). It contributes significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2011, small-scale mining contributed about 28% of total gold production in Ghana, which had a significant effect on the 14.4% GDP growth attained in that year (Aryee, 2012). The country recorded the highest growth rate in the world in 2011.

Despite the economic benefits of mining to any nation, the negative impact on the environment cannot be underestimated. All water bodies in Ghana are in various degrees of pollution as a result of the activities of small-scale and illegal mining activities. Water treatment facilities are breaking down continuously, leading to unimaginable hikes in the cost of producing water for public consumption and industry.

Experts predict that Ghana will import water very shortly if small-scale and illegal mining activities are not curtailed as a matter of urgency. A BBC Africa report on August 11, 2021, tweeted @BBCAfrica, "60% of Ghana's water bodies are now polluted, mainly due to illegal gold mining. At this rate, Ghana may have to start importing water to meet its needs by 2030" (BBC Africa's @Sulengo investigates).

On February 28, 2017, a prominent Ghanaian broadcasting network (citifmonline.com) reported, "Ghana may soon import water over 'galamsey' (illegal mining) - EPA." In this report, the Director of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in Ghana said in an interview, "We anticipated this problem a long time ago that it is going to come a time when we continue the way we are going as a country, we are going to destroy all our water bodies and import water for drinking." In the same report, the Ghana Water Company Limited revealed that they were compelled to shut down several water treatment plants because the water had been rendered untreatable by these activities.

The government has, on numerous occasions, attempted to solve the problem but has failed miserably on all occasions. This remains the most critical situation in the hands of the government, citizens, and all stakeholders, resulting in a humanitarian crisis for the country, the continent, and the global community.

Therefore, climate action is necessary as a matter of urgency to avert this looming catastrophe. This research project will go a long way to contribute positively toward this goal of preventing the devastating consequences of these illicit human activities on our environment.