



# PAEDIATRIC SOCIETY OF GHANA

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## **Paediatric Society of Ghana Calls for Immediate Action to End Galamsey Now to Protect the Children of Ghana**

The Paediatric Society of Ghana (PSG) is alarmed by the escalating destruction of Ghana's environment over the past few years through illegal mining ("galamsey") and its devastating impact on children's health, future livelihoods, and national survival.

Galamsey has poisoned rivers, degraded fertile farmlands, and polluted communities with heavy metals, exposing entire communities, especially vulnerable children, who absorb these heavy metals more than adults to severe health risks.

Heavy metal poisoning causes diseases of the liver, kidneys, brain, heart, lungs and other vital parts of the body. The toxic effects are associated with cancers, congenital malformations (abnormalities present at birth), and preventable death.

The pollution of the environment results in contaminated food and water, which are consumed by almost every household in Ghana. The deleterious effect of galamsey is both an environmental disaster and an immediate public health catastrophe. We are facing an existential threat!

### **Given that:**

- Children have an increased risk of heavy metal poisoning due to their fast growth and increased ability to absorb these heavy metals (including babies in the womb) and (b) exposure through multiple routes, including contaminated soil, air, and food.



- Children are susceptible to dangerous chemicals that can damage the growing brain and nervous system & impair learning, immune system dysfunction, and serious short and long-term multi-organ system impact.
- Child labour in Ghana's galamsey sector is pervasive, illegal, and the result of poverty and lack of educational opportunities and community resources.
- Children are dependent upon their parents and community as to where they live and grow, and for their achievement of physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual health.

**The Paediatric Society of Ghana asserts that poisoning water sources is classified as a higher war crime under the Geneva Convention [Additional Protocol I (1977), Article 54(2)].**

The Society calls for:

1. An immediate end to galamsey.
2. Active screening, identification and care for children and all persons in galamsey hotspots affected by heavy metal poisoning and other health problems from galamsey.
3. National and local awareness-raising campaign to educate communities about the health risks of galamsey to the community.
4. Additional punitive measures for perpetrators of child labour at galamsey sites.
5. Responsible actions to be taken by leaders and all Ghanaians to restore our environment to health.

**In addition, PSG pledges its support in the fight against galamsey in the following ways:**

1. Develop and disseminate information, education and communication materials on the health impact of galamsey on children.
2. Train healthcare professionals on early recognition of affected children and link them to appropriate care.
3. Work with other experts to actively screen children in affected communities for heavy metal toxicity and other health problems, with logistical support and



funding from the government and health partners.

4. Work with other partners and agencies to carry out research into the health impact of galamsey and other environmental hazards on children.
5. Collaborate with other influence-interest groups and traditional leaders to fight against galamsey.

The Paediatric Society of Ghana calls on all health workers, community leaders, parents, students, teachers, and all civil society to amplify our advocacy and join hands to say:

**Enough is enough!  
No water, no future!  
End galamsey now!**

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