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Can Critical Mineral Deals Benefit Local Communities? Insights From Ghana's Lithium Project

Folashadé Soulé, Mawuenyega Butu, and Emmanuel Darkwah

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Introduction

In recent years, African governments have been endeavoring to benefit from the clean energy transition by being more than mere suppliers of raw critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and copper. These minerals, also referred to as green minerals or minerals of the future, are used for producing rechargeable electric vehicle batteries and other clean energy technologies deemed critical to the transition from carbon-based energy to clean energy.¹ Illustrating their importance, a recent World Bank report on “Minerals for Climate Action” indicated that there will be about a fivefold increase in the demand for minerals such as graphite, lithium, and cobalt by 2050.²

Lithium, in particular, is assuming a prominent role in the global energy transition and in the efforts of African countries to capture value from green minerals. According to the International Energy Agency, the projected use of lithium in clean technologies will likely increase demand for the mineral thirteenfold by 2040.³ African governments see a move up the value chain as an important step in expanding their economies and creating much needed employment opportunities. Even the basic processing of lithium in-country, for instance, could double the value of exports, according to experts.⁴ Approximately 80 percent of the lithium produced worldwide is used to make batteries.⁵ It is mostly used in the production of rechargeable batteries for gadgets such as digital cameras, laptops, mobile phones, and electric cars and non-rechargeable batteries for toys. It is also used in the production of ceramics and glass.

Ghana’s ongoing experience in trying to capture and domesticate segments of the lithium value chain offers valuable insights regarding potential benefits to local communities. While the country’s discovery of critical minerals deposits such as iron ore, silica, and lithium

happened relatively recently, it has been mining manganese and bauxite for decades.⁶ There are currently two known sites of lithium deposits in the country's Central Region, namely the Egyasimanku and Ewoyaa hills as shown in Figure 1. On October 19, 2023, Ghana's government granted Barari DV Ghana Limited—a subsidiary of Atlantic Lithium Limited—a fifteen-year lease to commence mining of lithium at Ewoyaa in the Mfantseman Municipality.

This paper examines how local communities can benefit from the global rush for critical minerals using the case study of Ghana. First, it unpacks the rationale behind the fifteen-year mining lease, the negotiation process, and the different positions of various actors, including civil society. It then examines the project's potential impact on communities, drawing on several interviews with senior policymakers in Accra and two focus group discussions (FGDs) in Ewoyaa.⁷ The paper concludes with a discussion on how Ghana could maximize, for its local communities, the benefits of rising global interest in critical minerals.

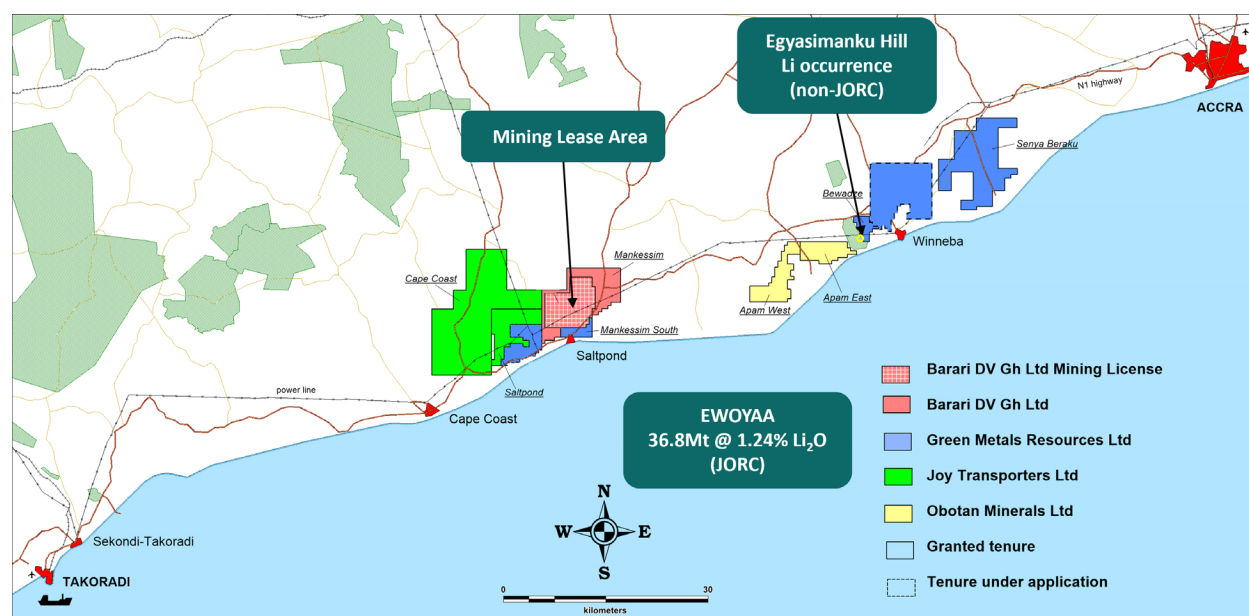
Ghana's Mining Sector

Ghana is endowed with an appreciable number of minerals and metals, including gold, bauxite, manganese, diamonds, crude oil deposits, and the more recently discovered lithium. In 2023, mining and quarrying were the largest contributing subsectors within the industrial sector in Ghana, with a 13.7 percent contribution to GDP.⁸ In 2024, Ghana's gold exports alone increased by 53.2 percent, reaching a total value of \$11.64 billion. Notably, nearly \$5 billion of the exports were contributed by legal small-scale miners.⁹ Mining activities in Ghana can be categorized as small-scale or large-scale. Small-scale mining is statutorily reserved for only Ghanaians. It requires relatively less capital investment compared to large-scale mining, which requires huge capital investments. Until 1989, small-scale mining was highly unregulated and considered illegal in Ghana. That year, the government enacted the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law (PNDC Law 218) to formalize the country's small-scale mining activities as part of the Economic Recovery Program.¹⁰ However, various small-scale miners continue to operate illegally without licenses.

Even though artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is a legitimate livelihood in Ghana, contributing about 35 percent of total gold output, most ASM operations are illegal and informal. ENACT Africa estimates that 85 percent of small-scale miners operate illegally.¹¹ Some experts attribute this challenge to the complex and lengthy bureaucratic licensing regime associated with the formalization of mining activities.¹² Large-scale mining, on the other hand, is better regulated and has higher operating standards compared to the ASM sector. Large-scale mining businesses usually require many skilled workers, sophisticated equipment, more advanced technology, and huge capital investments.

Ghana's first lithium mining lease, which Parliament is yet to ratify, was granted to Barari DV Ghana Limited in 2023. The site is located in Ewoyaa, a village about 2.5 miles from the town of Mankessim and 62 miles from the capital Accra. It is a farming community with 108 households comprising about 580 people in total. The village dwellers are mostly peasant farmers. Though they have access to electrical power and plumbing, they lack some social amenities such as a nearby medical clinic, school, and police station. Children from the village have to travel on foot for about thirty minutes to the town of Saltpond to receive basic education. A nursery school has recently been set up in Ewoyaa to provide education for young children.

Figure 1. Map of Ewoyaa and Egyasimanku Lithium Mining Project



Source: "Cape Coast Lithium Portfolio," Atlantic Lithium, accessed July 2025, <https://www.atlanticlithium.com.au/projects-ghana>.

Governance and Regulation of the Sector

The legal instrument underpinning Ghana's mining industry is premised on Article 257(6) of the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, which states that "every mineral in its natural state found in Ghana is the property of the Republic of Ghana and is vested in the President for and on behalf of the people. According to Article 268(1) of Ghana's Constitution and Section 5(4) of the 2006 Mining and Minerals Act (Act 703), "upon execution of a mining lease, the Minister shall cause the Mining Lease to be laid in Parliament for ratification."¹³

In addition to Ghana's 1992 Constitution and the 2006 Minerals and Mining Act, its mining industry is primarily governed by the 2015 Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act

(Act 900) and the 2019 Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act (Act 995).¹⁴ Other regulations governing the mining sector include the Mineral and Mining General Regulations L.I 2173;¹⁵ Mineral and Mining Support Service L.I 2174;¹⁶ Mineral and Mining Compensation and Resettlement L.I 2175;¹⁷ and Mineral and Mining Health and Safety L.I 2182,¹⁸ among others.

In terms of institutional governance of the mining sector, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources is mandated to ensure the sustainable management and utilization of the nation's lands, forests, and wildlife resources, as well as the efficient management of the mineral resources for socioeconomic growth and development.¹⁹ The Minerals Commission, an agency under this ministry, is specifically responsible for the regulation and management of mineral resource use in Ghana and the coordination of related policies.²⁰

To increase the mineral wealth of the country, a sovereign Minerals Income Investment Fund (MIIF) was established in 2018, mandated by the Minerals Income Investment Fund Act (Act 978). The fund is tasked with managing the equity interest of Ghana in mining companies and generating dividends from these equity interests, receiving mineral royalties and other related income due to the state from mining, and providing for the management and investment of these funds.²¹ In July 2023, the Ghanaian government approved the Green Minerals Policy, a new policy for the exploration, management, and regulation of green minerals in Ghana.²² These green minerals include lithium, bauxite, cobalt, manganese, copper, nickel, and granite, and they are all essential for the switch to clean energy. This policy is expected to increase revenue for the state while adding value to Ghana's critical minerals.

Effects of Illegal Mining on the Environment

Although Ghana earns substantial foreign exchange in the mining and exporting of mineral resources, mining activities have had serious repercussions on the environment, as well as on the livelihoods of rural people whose farmlands are transferred as concessions to mining companies.²³ These farmers become vulnerable as they lose their farmlands to mining activities. Although they are compensated to look for alternative farmlands for farming or alternative sources of livelihoods, in their quest to survive, they usually face high rent or unfavorable land tenure systems that plunge them into poverty. The loss of farmland also leads to low food production due to a reduction in farming activities. In some cases, land and water become polluted, leading to higher food and water production costs. Resettling the affected communities is considered a form of compensation, but the movement can trigger harsh living conditions—such as unplanned economic hardship, exposure to illness, loss of farmlands, and high food, water, and other utility costs for the affected groups of people.²⁴

The impact of mining activities on the livelihoods of households in the affected communities is worth examining if Ghana is committed to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As researchers have found, local populations living around

illegal mining sites face health risks as a result of water pollution from mining activities—the pollution affects both drinking water supplies and agriculture.²⁵

For instance, in September 2024, the Ghana Water Company attributed water supply challenges in Cape Coast, Elmina, and the surrounding communities to the activities of illegal mining. The company reported that the average turbidity of the Pra River to be treated reached 14,000 nephelometric turbidity units, far exceeding the designed level of 2,000 for adequate treatment.²⁶ Similar reports have been recorded across the country.

Rationale Behind the Ghana Lithium Deal

In 2012, Barari DV Ghana Limited (formerly Iron Ridge Resources)—a subsidiary of Atlantic Lithium, an Australian lithium exploration and development company—was granted a reconnaissance license for exploration in the Ewoyaa concession. Barari discovered high-grade lithium in commercial quantities in 2017. The discovery of lithium in Ewoyaa led to the conversion of the mineral reconnaissance license to a mineral prospecting license on March 23, 2018. Five years on, a mining lease was granted to Barari. A prospecting license is granted to a company for the initial assessment of mineral potential, while a mining lease gives the company an exclusive right to mine. This is the first mining lease granted to a foreign company to mine critical minerals in Ghana. The lease was granted to Barari under the Green Minerals Policy, the government's blueprint to govern the exploration and production of critical minerals. Throughout the mine's anticipated lifetime of twelve years, 3.6 million tonnes of spodumene (high-purity lithium ore) concentrate are anticipated to be produced, with the first production scheduled for 2025 after ratification by Parliament.²⁷

Plans to negotiate an investment of up to \$30 million in Atlantic Lithium have been confirmed by the MIIF.²⁸ According to the fund's chief executive officer, the strategic goal is to facilitate growth in the processing of lithium battery production and other by-products. There are also plans to support an electronic vehicle industry in Ghana. The MIIF is also negotiating with Atlantic Lithium or its subsidiary Barari to be listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange.²⁹

In 2021, Piedmont Lithium (global) signed an investment agreement with Atlantic Lithium to secure spodumene; Piedmont has a supply contract with electric vehicle maker Tesla. Piedmont Lithium initially invested \$15 million and, subsequently, \$17 million in Atlantic Lithium. Cumulatively, Piedmont Lithium owns a 22.5 percent stake in Barari's Ewoyaa project.³⁰ Piedmont has indicated plans to inject an additional \$70 million in the project's third and final stage to acquire an additional 27.5 percent interest. This will bring Piedmont's equity stake to about 50 percent. Per the deal, Barari will sell to Piedmont at least 50 percent of the spodumene concentrate from the Ewoyaa project at a predetermined rate.

In May 2023, the minister of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources submitted to Ghana's cabinet a memorandum requesting policy approval for the exploitation, management, and utilization of green minerals. The Green Minerals Policy was approved on July 27, 2023. Some of the provisions include increasing the royalty rate for green minerals and increasing state participation in all green mineral operations to a minimum of 30 percent. The policy also implores the listing of mining companies on the Ghana Stock Exchange and the adding of value to raw minerals in line with the African Union's Africa Mining Vision (AMV), which provides a framework for the sustainable development of the mining sector in Africa and the African Green Minerals Strategy (AGMS). This strategy hinges on four pillars: advancing mineral development, developing personnel and technological capability, building key value chains, and enhancing mineral stewardship. Both the AMV and AGMS aim for the "transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development."³¹

Although faced with opposition from the then main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the minister argued that the lithium deal was the best compared to other contracts the government had supported in the past. Currently, the deal offers Ghana 10 percent in royalties—an increase from 5 percent in other contracts.³² Furthermore, through the MIIF, the government will acquire an additional 6 percent stake in the Ewoyaa project and 3.06 percent of the parent company listed on the stock exchanges in Australia and London.³³

The Negotiation Process and Divergent Perspectives on the Deal

According to interviewees at the Minerals Commission, the government's approach toward critical minerals has been different from traditional minerals such as gold and diamonds. The game plan has been to cover the entire supply chain (in other words, including processing, refining, and downstream production) and, in doing so, tap into the full value chain.

The negotiation team from Ghana had representatives from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Minerals Commission, MIIF, Geological Survey Authority, and the cabinet. On the other side, Barari was represented by its experts and those of the parent company, Atlantic Lithium. A broad spectrum of stakeholders was consulted in the deal's negotiation process, but the Parliament of Ghana had not yet scrutinized the deal.

Local government officials, traditional leaders, and community members from Mfantseman Municipality were also involved in the negotiation process, before the scoping report was drafted. This participation led to the agreement to allocate 1 percent of the company's revenue to a Community Development Fund. That fund will be used to support education, health, and agriculture in the community.

During the negotiations, government negotiators tabled some critical clauses around the fiscal regime and value addition. They proposed a royalty rate of 15 percent—higher than the existing royalty rates of 3–5 percent for traditional minerals—but settled on 10 percent according to Section 25 of Act 703, as amended by the 2015 Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act.³⁴ Fiscal regimes in countries such as Chile, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe were used as benchmarks for negotiation. There were particularly delicate issues during negotiations related to the environment and, consequently, health and safety. This is because lithium is a new mineral, and it is unclear how the environment will be affected, making this a gray area.

Free carried interest has also been increased from 10 percent to 13 percent according to Section 19 (b) of the Mining Lease. Barari will also be listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange to ensure local participation according to the lease agreement terms. Investors such as pension funds, fund management companies, and individuals will have the opportunity to be shareholders in the company. In adding value to the lithium spodumene, Barari is expected to conduct and complete a feasibility study for the establishment of a chemical plant within four months after the signing of the lease agreement. The government has also introduced the Growth and Sustainability Levy Act, 2023 (Act 1095), which requires mining companies, among others, to pay a levy at a rate of 1 percent of their gross production in addition to the 10 percent royalty payment. The levy is applied to profit before tax or production of existing mining companies for the 2023, 2024, and 2025 years of assessment. Barari is expected to pay this levy when it starts operation. In the 2025 budget, this levy was increased to 3 percent and its sunset clause extended to 2028.³⁵

An expert from the Ghana Chamber of Mines stated the following about the Green Minerals Policy before the lease agreement was signed: “The proposed critical mining law/regulation will focus on the processing of the spodumene concentrate to semi-finished and finished lithium value chain products. This will be different from traditional mining where minerals are exported in their raw form. Also, the fiscal regime will be different. It’s likely the corporate tax rate, royalties, and carried interest will be higher as compared to the existing legal regime.”³⁶

Diverging Views From Parliamentarians and Civil Society

As noted, Parliament has yet to ratify the mining lease issued to Barari in accordance with Ghana’s laws. On April 29, 2025, the Ghana Chamber of Mines urged Parliament to promptly ratify the mining lease of Atlantic Lithium for the Ewoyaa project. The chamber warned that any further delays could have significant repercussions for the company and its stakeholders. Opinions, among parliamentarians and civil society, are divided on the terms

of the lithium deal. The then minority in Ghana's Parliament—the NDC—raised issues about the terms being granted to Barari and called for a thorough scrutiny before Parliament ratifies the deal. Specifically, they expressed concerns about the lack of engagement with local communities and the 10 percent fixed royalty payment. They asked for the deal to be amended to allow Ghana to receive, on top of the 10 percent royalty payment, additional tax payments when Barari receives a windfall profit. (Mining companies receive a windfall profit when commodities prices skyrocket on the international market.)³⁷

Some civil society organizations (CSOs), experts, academics, clergy, and other opposition parties have also raised concerns about the terms, while some have hailed the government for negotiating a good deal for the country. In expressing its concern, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a local think tank, opined that the extraction of lithium should be covered by a joint-venture agreement wherein a Ghanaian government-owned company directly mines the lithium in coordination with Barari. CSOs such as IMANI Africa and the IEA also want the deal to clarify what is expected of Barari in terms of value addition to the lithium spodumene. An IEA statement released in 2023 vehemently opposed the deal and called it a “colonial-type” contract skewed in favor of foreign companies.³⁸ According to the institute, Ghana can learn from an improved transactional model adopted by major lithium producers such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Mexico, which benefit more from exploitation of the natural resource. The IEA has further proposed that a Ghana Lithium Company be set up and commissioned to develop the entire value chain, from mining raw lithium to manufacturing batteries and other products in Ghana. Finally, CSOs have also called for a local refinery to be established before excavation commences, per current international best practice.

Opinions differ, however, on the creation of a Ghana Lithium Company. In an interview with an energy expert at the Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP), another local think tank, on whether the government should choose the Ghana Integrated Aluminum Development Corporation model for lithium production, he responded: “It is a known fact that the government has not been effective in delivering on big projects. For example, the Tema Oil Refinery. I recommend that the government should create an enabling environment that will attract the private sector into the lithium value chain.”

CSOs also have strong views on aspects of the fiscal regime and linkage development plans. IMANI Africa cautioned the government about the potential of transfer pricing between Piedmont and Barari and proposed that the sale of spodumene be based on current international prices at that point in time, as done in India. This proposal has since been addressed in the mining lease.³⁹ But strict implementation will be required for Ghana to get the maximum benefit from lithium production. Ghana can generate additional income from building linkage industries along the value chain of lithium mining. Finished lithium products such as lithium carbonate and lithium hydroxides used in batteries can provide an enormous opportunity to the country.

According to Schedule 2 of the Mining Lease, Barari will also produce by-products such as feldspar for any chemical plant established in the country by a third party, in the event Barari is unable to establish a chemical plant for downstream consumption. In addition, all by-products from the Barari's operation, such as feldspar and kaolin, will be sold locally to serve as an opportunity for domestic ceramic production and other industries.

Feldspar, for instance, is used in the production of ceramic tiles. According to the Minerals Commission, there are five local ceramic tile producers in Ghana, which consume about 900,000 metric tonnes of feldspar annually. Preliminary studies contracted by the commission show that the Ewoyaa lithium project will produce 1,200,000 metric tonnes of feldspar annually, which could be used by existing manufacturers to expand their production in the medium term.⁴⁰

In October 2023, Ghana's Ministry of Trade and Industry tabled in Parliament a proposed ban or restrictions on imports of certain goods, including ceramic products.⁴¹ This is an import substitution industrialization strategy to boost local production and create jobs in the country.

In sum, the opposition and minority in Parliament want portions of the deal to be amended, especially the fiscal regime. CSOs are also calling for clarity on the value addition clauses in the mining lease to ensure that Barari invests in the lithium value chain in Ghana. The New Patriotic Party government, on the other hand, postulates that the deal is in the best interest of Ghana because it focuses on value addition, unlike previous mining leases governing traditional minerals.

Perceptions and Impact on Local Communities So Far

To inform this paper, two FDGs were conducted in Ewoyaa, the central geographical point of Barari's lithium mining project. The focus groups were carried out to seek the views of both men and women in Ewoyaa, as well as the level of community involvement in the entire deal. One focus group included youth between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, and the other group included older adults who were over thirty-five years old. The two age groups were created to ensure that participants could communicate freely without feeling intimidated.

The focus group findings revealed that the people of Ewoyaa are fully aware of lithium mining activity in the community. They, however, seem to have little specific knowledge about the impact of mining on the environment. In addition, the findings indicate that some community members have high expectations of the employment opportunities created from

Barari's pending mining project, while others are skeptical about their prospects of gaining employment due to their low educational background.

Exploration of lithium on community farms started about seven years ago. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show a notice on a wall in Ewoyaa and a boundary line signage from the parent company, Atlantic Lithium. According to an elder of Ewoyaa, the leaders have been involved in all the stages of the pre-discussions with Atlantic Lithium:

“I was involved at almost all the stages of discussions. There were times we received officials from the company who came to find out what would be our desire should they discover the mineral here. We made it clear to them that it will be welcoming news to us. Our main request will be for them to employ our youth to work with the company. Those who do not have the required training, we expect the company to train them in the required field they may need.”

Figure 2: A notice from Atlantic Lithium on a building wall at Ewoyaa.

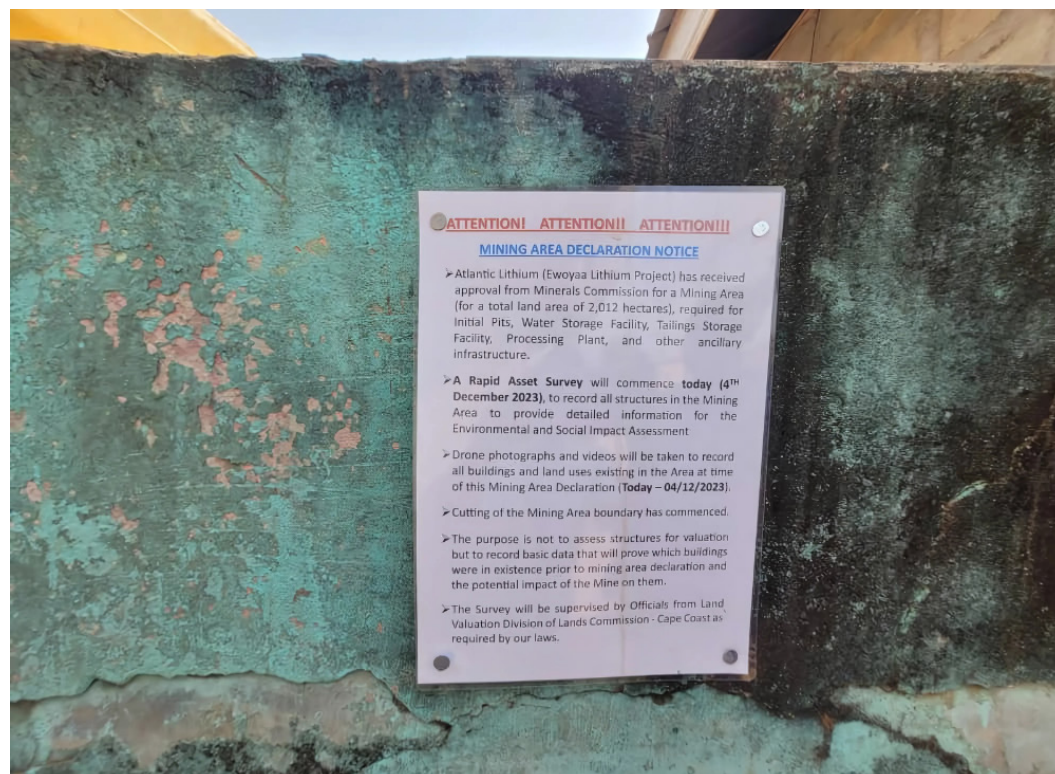


Photo credit: Folashadé Soulé, Mawuenyega Makafui Butu, and Emmanuel Amoah-Darkwah.

Figure 3: A signboard showing the boundary line for the Ewoyaa lithium project.



Photo credit: Folashadé Soulé, Mawuenyega Makafui Butu, and Emmanuel Amoah-Darkwah

Young people were also progressively involved, although a lack of information and communication led to confusion in the initial stage:

“We were initially not involved, but now I would say that the level of involvement is okay. Even though we have had some meetings with them. I must add that since we were not informed about their mission when they came, it created a lot of problems for the community and even those of us who worked with them. There are times people have to chase us from their farms. They were not paying for the items they destroyed on the farms, but it got to a time when they requested for the affected farmers and paid for the damages.”

According to some youth who took part in the FDGs, initially Barari dug their farmlands without their permission or discussion. The company later approached the farmers and apologized for the mishap. Some farmers still had to fight hard before being compensated for the loss incurred on their farmlands due to the exploration. Figure 4 shows samples of lithium on a farm.

Regarding being given prior notice about the prospecting for lithium, several younger FGD participants stated that there should have been a pre-discussion with the entire community before beginning the prospecting. As one said:

“The company just went straight to employ some of the youth in the community for their activity without the entire community knowing what they are here to do. As we speak, there has not been proper engagement with the families on whose land they are going to mine. . . . There should have been some pre-discussion with the families who own the lands even before they start the prospecting. That did not happen.”

While some FGD participants support the mining activities in their village, others have mixed feelings due to a lot of uncertainties. Those in support expressed excitement about Barari resettling them and building new block houses for them. The company’s intention was communicated to them four days before the interview occurred. Yet community members seem to have little or no idea of the natural resources deposited in their soil. Regarding their right to demand transparency and accountability around mining activities, this is what one FGD respondent had to say:

“I believe this [transparency and accountability] should be between the company and the government. Since we don’t have any knowledge about mining, I cannot tell how to go about these demands. I believe the government has done the due diligence; that is why they have allowed the company to start mining. . . . When the district chief executive called us to explain things to us in order for us not to demonstrate, he said that the government has about [a] 13 percent stake in the whole deal, while the community will hold about 1 percent. This goes to confirm what I earlier said that the company and the government have made their own agreement.”

As noted earlier, the focus group participants demonstrated limited knowledge about the impact of mining on the environment. They also did not appear to have any knowledge about the importance of lithium. However, some community members are skeptical about the project’s mining activities due to the high probability of losing their farmlands and seem concerned about pollution. Another participant noted:

“There will be air pollution. The cars that will be moving around the community will cause a lot of dust in the atmosphere. Again, it will result in water pollution. The chemicals used for mining will find its way into the various sources of water.”

Under normal circumstances, farmers are to be compensated for the destruction of their food crops during mine exploration. However, as it stood in February 2024, some farmers had been compensated while others had not. According to respondents who were compensated, they received their compensation only after they angrily confronted mine company officials. One respondent stated:

“I was given 200 GHS [\$19] for the destruction of a lot of crops. I had to even give them 60 pesewas [\$.06] as change. This was to cover for the plantain, cocoyam, and cassava that they uprooted. I was given this money somewhere at the time when they started the digging, around 2014.”

Figure 4: Samples of lithium on a farm.



Photo credit: Folashadé Soulé, Mawuenyega Makafui Butu, and Emmanuel Amoah-Darkwah.

Another stated:

“I was expecting that the company would pre-inform the owners of the farms on the days they would be entering the farms to work. This would have made us put our things in order before they entered. My husband has about six traps he uses on his farm, which have been damaged by the activities of the miners. To date, I have been following up on the payment but to no avail. They don’t know that the trap is property to us, which we use to catch meat for sale.”

Still, a third respondent confirmed that:

“The company was doing as they liked at the beginning of their activity. They were not paying for the damages. However, when the locals [farmers] were angry and started complaining, then, they started paying something for the damage caused.”

Despite these issues, some respondents support the mining project because they believe it will provide employment opportunities for youth in the community.

“I also support it. It will help create employment for the youth in the community.”

But contrary to this view, other respondents who previously worked on mining projects in Ghana stated:

“I have worked as a driver in [the] Newmont and Adamus mining companies. I have also worked with Golden Star Company, and so I was even in Tarkwa some two weeks ago. I have equally worked with Drilling Masters and other drilling companies. We drill for some of the mining sites. When the mining activity starts, there are a lot of needs for laborers. Sad to say, they don’t pay laborers the right amount the workers deserve. Once the actual mining starts, the company will need and look for people with education and technical knowledge. Once the youth in the community don’t have the needed qualification, it means there will be no employment for the people.”

While some respondents are satisfied with the idea of Barari resettling them and building houses for them, others are concerned about their children’s education and having sustainable means to care for their families. Some noted that relocation to a new settlement could bring the people of Ewoyaa closer to a school, or better still, Barari could build schools in the new communities as part of the company’s corporate social responsibilities.

Studies have shown that mining-induced relocation has some positive impact, including increased access to infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and water systems.⁴²

Most FGD participants are hopeful that employment among youth will rise.

“The chief and his elders met with the youth. They told us that the company will employ most of the youth in this community. So there will be the need to acquire the needed skills, but since most of us do not have the required skills, the chief said it has entered into some agreement with a company to train us. So that we can be employed by the company when the work starts.”

Another stated:

“We have informed the youth and made them understand that the officials have promised to employ them should they come to start the project. As we speak, all the youth are in support of it. We also have [a] mines committee that leads some of these discussions.”

Nonetheless, concerns were raised about whether the people in the community can meet the company’s labor demands, as most of the youth have low levels of education.

“The company has promised to employ the youth in this community. Yet this same company brought a communique which suggests that they are looking for people with [a] diploma and above to employ. Yet most of us here do not have such a qualification.”

Similarly, another respondent stated:

“This is where as youth we need to educate ourselves so that we can have the right qualification to work with the company and not always depend on the farm work.”

How Ghana Can Maximize the Benefits of Global Interest in Critical Minerals for Its Local Communities

At the national level, there are several ways Ghana can ensure that its local communities successfully benefit from the critical minerals boom, especially from the newest discovery, lithium. Foremost, Ghana needs to appreciate the importance of these minerals in the world economy and strategically position itself to maximize returns from these minerals. Officials, technocrats, politicians, and other stakeholders who represent Ghana at the negotiating table must take advantage of the opportunities to advance the interest of the communities. Negotiators must be abreast of relevant information in order to maximize their bargaining power. That said, a cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken to inform direct negotiations. The elders of Ewoyaa should engage seasoned technocrats to assist them with negotiating their compensation packages, including their communities' relocation. While bargaining, these elders must safeguard the overall welfare of their citizenry. Specifically, measures need to be established to ensure that newly resettled communities have access to social amenities such as schools, hospitals, police stations, clean water, and functioning telecommunication networks.

Ensure Environmental Protection and a Fair Distribution of Returns

Strong institutions within the mining sector should ensure environmental protection and a fair distribution of returns or benefits to communities. The country's already good legal and regulatory frameworks should be further bolstered and better equipped for the opportunities and challenges of the new global rush for critical minerals. Policymakers need to develop a clear multitier, comprehensive legal framework to govern the mining sector. The mining regulatory bodies must ensure that the framework governing mining is transparent and devoid of any ambiguity. The bodies' mandates must also be updated regularly to reflect changes within the mining sector. High political will and steadfast commitments are required for any country to build strong institutions within the mining sector. Policymakers should

strike a balance between adopting international best practices and drawing lessons from specific initiatives in countries that have successful mining industries. For instance, to profit from value addition and stop losing mining revenues to foreign corporations, Ghana policymakers could learn from Indonesia's banning of raw nickel and bauxite ore exports from its mines in 2014.⁴³ The contract between the government of Ghana and Barari could take a similar turn to enable high foreign exchange in the export of lithium with value addition.

Enforce Mining Regulations and Standards

Regulatory bodies such as Ghana's Environmental Protection Agency and the Minerals Commission must enforce sustainable mining practices (for example, mercury-free mining, land reclamation, and afforestation). Advancing stringent environmental standards will go a long way in helping to reduce the negative impact of mining and possibly restore the land. For successful application of the standards, however, miners must receive institutional support; it will enhance accountability and compliance, especially among miners working at a small scale.

Provide Suitable Compensation and Alternative Sources of Livelihood and Employment to Displaced Communities

Over the years, communities that have given up their lands to mining—either large-scale or small-scale—have not received all the benefits expected.⁴⁴ Lithium mining activities in Ghana must promote community development.

Barari must be transparent with the people of Ewoyaa on their valuation of crops. Farmers should be duly compensated for the loss of their produce, as well as all trees of importance to them on their farm. For their part, traditional leaders who oversee the concession areas must have one voice and increase their negotiation skills to ensure that their communities benefit fully from the mining. The concerns of the local populations of Ewoyaa mostly center on posterity after resettlement. As part of the negotiations, scholarship schemes (up to the tertiary level) should be provided for children within the catchment area of the mining concession. The youth in Ewoyaa and surrounding villages—where the lithium concessions cover—can benefit from employment opportunities if they are trained to meet the labor demands of the mining activities.

Resettling the local population is insufficient. Their new source of livelihood should be a matter of discussion as well. Traditional leaders must ensure that displaced communities are ushered into alternative sources of livelihood and employment after their resettlement. Those affected could either continue farming if farmlands are available or be enrolled in vocational training. The compensation they receive could serve as seed capital for a trade after receiving that training. This support will ensure that they are not plunged into poverty after they have been resettled and any financial compensation runs out. In service of these goals, all communication gaps should be bridged to increase trust. In this regard, local populations have a role to play in attending community meetings.

Increase Local Participation

Ghanaians will benefit from the discovery of lithium if there is a deliberate attempt to increase local participation. Mining concessions should be made available to local mining firms. The mining sector has great potential to create employment, at least in local communities, and to generate revenue through taxation. The interviews and FGD findings show that the people of Ewoyaa look forward to the employment opportunities created through the mining of lithium on their ancestral land. Though many citizens of Ewoyaa may not benefit directly from the opportunities, due to low levels of education, some Ghanaians with the necessary skills within the district or region could be considered for employment. The mining of lithium could therefore become a win for Ghanaians more broadly and not only the people of Ewoyaa. One strategy to ensure that employment opportunities are leveraged locally would be to seek a labor force (both technical and nontechnical) that is at least 70 percent Ghanaian. In addition, the involvement of academics and students would go a long way in ensuring that the gap between academia and industry is closed. Specifically, students from either the Tarkwa Campus or the Takoradi Campus of the University of Mines and Technology could be given internships and research opportunities within the Barari company.

Local participation and the economic benefits from mining will also depend on further formalization of the sector. This formalization will not only increase earnings but also ensure that mining activities are effectively monitored by regulators and that policies governing mining activities enable a high level of local participation. Mining companies must be encouraged to hire and train local labor in addition to sourcing goods and services locally. Policies and governing frameworks within the mining sector should be deliberate and more explicit in the development of local content policies—pertaining to the percentage of locally produced materials, workers, financing, goods, and services sourced from within the country for a particular project. This will promote the growth of domestic businesses, increase local job creation, and increase national revenue.

How Barari Can Ensure Benefits to Local Populations

Atlantic Lithium has a role to play in ensuring that Ghanaians, specifically those in Ewoyaa, benefit from this mining deal and avoid undue hardships such as the negative effects of displacement. Investments in infrastructure such as roads, clinics, schools, water systems, and internet connectivity should be considered to help the communities adjust and benefit from the lithium project. The company should also be intentional in creating employment and training opportunities for the people of Ewoyaa. Another strategy worth considering is the establishment of business development grants and mentorships to help local entrepreneurs

set up businesses. Barari could also fund scholarships for children who hail from Ewoyaa. In addition to providing this funding, the company could partner with schools to improve their educational outcomes. Last but not least, Barari could partner with the government and nongovernmental organizations to roll out programs that will support sustainability goals.

Conclusion

The mining taking place in Ghana's communities must provide benefits for and further the welfare of its people. Therefore, policies governing mining exploitation in Ghana must ensure that mining companies follow sustainable mining practices and also specify how the well-being of the people and overall communities will be improved. Moreover, the government must promote dialogue between miners and community leaders at the local and regional levels to help the parties reach consensus on the community development measures needed to guarantee that mining activities directly benefit local populations. In addition to employment opportunities, these benefits could take the form of physical infrastructure such as roads, schools, and hospitals, as part of corporate social responsibility efforts. Studies have shown that such efforts in mining communities increase job creation and income generation, thereby improving the overall development of the communities.⁴⁵

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