

Brave female chief chases galamseyers out



Nana Quasie Essiem IV, Chief of Whindo in Effia Kwesimintsim

Rejects GH¢2m offer, seizes excavators

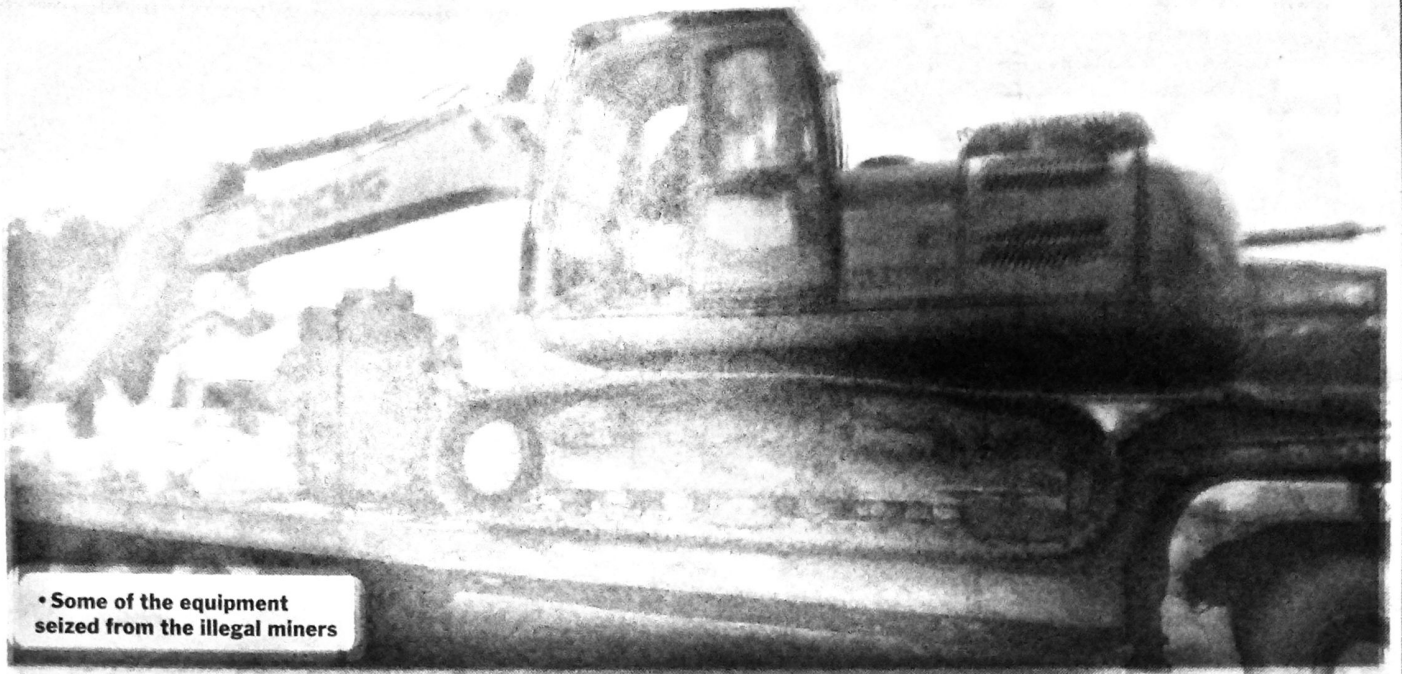
**From Dotsey Koblah
Aklorbortu, TAKORADI**

A FEMALE chief has raised eyebrows on account of her stance against galamsey in her community, declining a mouth-watering cash

offer and ordering the seizure of heavy-duty equipment of the illegal mining investors.

Nana Quasie Essiem IV, Chief of Whindo in Effia Kwesimintsim, near Takoradi in the Western Region, said the illegal miners were led to the community and her house by a resident.

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• Some of the equipment seized from the illegal miners

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who offered her GH¢2 million and other perks if she allowed them to mine gold in the area.

At a time when many traditional rulers are being accused of aiding illegal mining activities, Nana Essiem's bravery has been hailed as exemplary by her community and members of the public in Sekondi-Takoradi and the Effia Kwesimintsim area.

"I need money, we all need money, but I will not accept such money and mortgage the future of the community in the name of money," Nana Essiem told the *Daily Graphic*, her tone depicting anger, as she cited concerns over environmental degradation and the well-being of her people and generations unborn.

Seized equipment

She ordered the seizure of the equipment, including an excavator, changfang machines, power generators, water pumps and other accessories, which have since been transferred to the Western Regional Police Command in Sekondi in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

Providing details about the experience, she said a member of the community approached her and informed her about bringing some Chinese investors to mine in the community.

"I told him I am against the idea, even if he and the investors brought documents to mine legally, as long as I remain the Chief of the community, I disagree. We have seen the threat that these illegal mining activities have brought to mining communities:

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daily reports about health issues, children abandoning the classroom, drugs and other social vices, among many others," she said.

Nana Essiem said the young man who initially approached her returned with a long convoy of V8 SUVs, with Chinese investors, "with money, and I told them to go away, and ordered that my gate should not even be opened for them".

The return

The Chief said in her absence, however, the Chinese and their local collaborators returned with excavators, changfang machines and other mining equipment, flipped the earth open and destroyed the vegetative cover in readiness for their mining adventure.

Before the police could arrive, she said, "I hired a low bed and hauled the equipment to the regional Police Command for safekeeping. Now, they have to reclaim the land they have already destroyed and face the authorities".

"I will continue to gather the courage to confront the illegal miners in and around Whindo. As far as mining is concerned, I can assure my people and the nation that it is 'no' today, it will be 'no' tomorrow, and it will remain 'no' as long as I lead the community. Whether you have operating and other necessary permits

and licences or not, it is 'no'," she said.

"Our land is our livelihood; it is in trust for generations unborn, and we must protect it at all costs. Here, I am doing my part by saying no to illegal mining activities. The rest is for the authorities," Nana Essiem added.

The municipality

The Whindo community, the Chief said, had resolved to resist illegal mining in the area, with one member of the community declaring: "We will stand behind our Chief, and we will not let the illegal miners destroy our community, pollute our environment with mercury, introduce drugs, and introduce our children to illegal activities and prostitution; we are behind Nana Essiem".

An engineer and resident of the community, Henry K. Adjei, praised the leadership of the Chief and said it should be a shining example of what it meant to put the interests of a community above personal gain.

He said the system needed the likes of the Chief of Whindo to support the efforts of the government, which had been grappling with the issue of illegal mining for decades. It has led to widespread environmental degradation, health complications and increased turbidity of water, depriving people of potable water.

"Let us get more people with courage and the stance of Nana Essiem to support the state in the fight against illegal mining. Such courage is a significant tool for victory and a testament to the power of community leadership," Mr Adjei said.

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