

Is a community's struggle  
worth its price of gold?  
A Documentary Film



**When Silence is Golden** follows the film's director on a quest to lift the silence on the gold mining activities of a Canadian mining company near a small town in Western Ghana. Through her journey, we meet the inhabitants of a community who, despite efforts by the government to silence them, cannot hide their anger and are eager to express their grievances. In seeking to explain the complex situation in the town, the film comes face to face with the human rights implications of gold mining operations in Africa—intimidation by soldiers suppressing growing tensions, severe contamination of water sources and the possible resettlement of whole communities. A looming social conflict within the town is also exposed, where conflicting interests clash because of the presence of the mining company. This is a documentary film about the struggles of ordinary people who want their voices to be

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**WHEN SILENCE IS GOLDEN**  
*Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque*  
*Global Youth Fellow 2006-2007*  
*Final Report*

### *1) Policy of investigation*

Most Canadians' pension plans are being invested on shares of Canadian mining companies whose conduct in developing countries is unmonitored. For instance, Ghana (West Africa) is the host to more than 100 mining sites owned by Canadian corporations. The Canadian government has been one of the strongest advocates within the G8 for the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has put Ghana on its priority list for the past five years. However, according to local civil society, many Canadian gold mining operations in Ghana result in human rights violations within communities.

To what extent, are Canadian trade and aid policies coherent with Canada's proclaimed commitment to promoting democratic governance and human rights in Africa? What are Canada and Ghana's responsibilities towards communities affected by mining?

### *2) Activities conducted*

The main activity of this fellowship has been the production of a 52-minute documentary film, which is used as a tool to promote policy change. The full post-production of the film be completed on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007. A detailed document outlining the main aspects of the film (including a synopsis) and its targeted audience is attached to this report.

During the fellowship year, I travelled to Ghana three times (December 2006, March and June 2007). Preliminary footage for the film was shot during the first trip which enabled me to identify suitable 'characters' in the Dumasi community where the documentary is set and to meet with a variety of stakeholders and key resource people in Ghana. By the end of the trip I had a clearer idea of the different aspects the film would cover. The trip in March, was particularly important as it coincided with Ghana's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence and allowed me to gain an understanding of this important event in Ghanaian and African history. By the time of my third and final trip in June, I had a clear idea of where the film was going and by then, I was following crucial developments within the community I was filming.

In between each trips to Ghana, I met several experts in the UK and in Canada, conducted further research on the topic and identified alternative sources of funding for the film's completion.

To ensure the sustainability of the film, I will launch at the end of October/first week of November a website that will be a tool to promote the film and a resource for people who would like further information on the topic. For instance, not all interviews I conducted with experts and stakeholders are in the film. Some of will therefore be posted on the website as a resource.

Activities related to the film include:

- Presentation at the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and Canadian Extractive Industries in Developing Countries. (Toronto)
- Attended the UN Global Compact Conference in Accra.
- Secured additional funding from the Canadian Independent Film & Video Fund (CIFVF) and ARTICLE 19 for post-production.
- Participation in a CBC news report featuring one of the filming trips to Ghana. (by video-journalist Lyndsay Duncombe)
- Production of a 20-minute version of the above documentary for international television (Al Jazeera)
- Launch of a website to showcase the film, its related activities and policy issues ([www.when-silence-is-golden.org](http://www.when-silence-is-golden.org))
- Film used by Amnesty International (Francophone Branch) for a campaign on Canadian extractive industries and human rights (throughout Québec)
- Film used for *Journées québécoises de la solidarité internationale*, themed on Canadian extractive industries (throughout Québec)
- Film screenings to be held across Canada involving policymakers when possible (Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver)

## WHEN SILENCE IS GOLDEN

### *Synopsis*

#### Synopsis

*When Silence is Golden* follows the film's director in her quest to lift the silence on the gold mining activities of a Canadian mining company near a community in Western Ghana. Through her journey, we meet the inhabitants of this village who, despite efforts by the government to silence them, cannot hide their anger and are eager to express their grievances. In seeking to explain the complex situation in both towns, the film comes face to face with the human rights implications of gold mining operations in Africa—intimidation by soldiers policing the towns to suppress growing tensions, severe contamination of water sources and the possible resettlement of these communities. A looming social conflict within one of the communities is also exposed, where conflicting interests clash because of the presence of the mining company. This is a film about the struggles of ordinary people who want their voices to be heard; a portrait of a battle that many may consider as already lost.

Through the characters' plight, larger questions are reflected upon. 2007 is a crucial year: Ghana celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, a historical moment for Africa, symbolizing 50 years of "freedom"—but for whom? On the eve of 2007, The Governor General of Canada makes an official visit to Ghana, stressing Canada's important relationship to this West African country. In the meantime, Canada solidifies its commitment in development aid to the West African country while dismissing the plight caused by Canadian mining activities. Moreover, Canadians' pension plans are being invested on the Toronto Stock Exchange through, among others, shares of Canadian mining companies operating in Ghana. The film travels between Canada and Ghana, and questions to what extent Canadian trade and aid policies are coherent with Canada's proclaimed commitment to promoting democratic governance and human rights in Africa--what are Canada and Ghana's responsibilities towards communities affected by Canadian mining interests?

The approach to the filming is open and documentary in style. The film has unprecedented access to the site of the Canadian mining company and its management, while developing a close relationship with each of the affected local communities. Although on-camera interviews are included, the documentary is character-based.

This is an original and unique film. No documentary film has addressed the issue of foreign gold mining interests in Ghana before. The documentary will be used by secondary and post-secondary students who are studying journalism and human rights, and who are interested in international development issues. Special screenings will be held nation-wide in Canada and the US, for key policymakers, and for non-governmental organizations, to promote discussion on the implications of gold mining interests in Africa. The film comes at an important time, when the Canadian government has begun to analyze what mechanisms could be put in place to regulate Canadian extractive industries in developing countries.

*Film duration:* 52 minutes

### ***Statement of Objective***

The film aims to portray the complex situation affecting communities living near gold mining operations in Ghana. By following the daily lives and struggles of four members of these communities, the film examines the human rights implications of foreign extractive industries in Africa and the responsibility of foreign governments towards local communities affected by these interests.

### ***Narrative Summary***

#### *Context*

On June 16, 2006 hundreds of fish were found dead in a river near the town of Dumasi in the Wassa district in western Ghana. After being alerted by the local community, Ghana's Environmental Protection Agency and the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) discovered that Bogoso Gold Limited, a subsidiary of the Canadian company Golden Star Resources (GSR), had spilled cyanide solution into the Apepra stream. Cyanide is one of the world's most hazardous compounds, both to the natural environment and to human health. According to WACAM, members of the local community had eaten some of the dead fish before they received information about the spillage. In 2004, the same Canadian company was responsible for another cyanide spill, which resulted in the contamination of five rivers around the town of Dumasi. To this day, no course of action has been taken by the company to clean up the area or to compensate the community members.

Many questions arise when considering this situation, especially after one examines the region's larger socio-economic context as well as Canada's trade relationship with Ghana and its stated commitment to protecting human rights and promoting economic development in Africa. Ghana is the second largest producer of gold in Africa following South Africa, and mining is Ghana's primary industry. Ghana's Western region is one of the richest with respect to natural resources; however, it remains one of the poorest regions in the country. Ghana is also the host to more than 100 mining sites owned by Canadian corporations. The Canadian government has been one of the strongest advocates within the G8 for the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has put Ghana on its priority list for the past five years. Indeed, Canadian government policy indicates that Ghana is an economic success story, worthy of development assistance. Moreover, in addition to economic development, CIDA's stated policy towards Ghana includes provisions to promote Canadian values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. However, civil society groups such as

WACAM claim that human rights violations are committed on a daily basis by Canadian mining companies. To what extent, then, are Canadian trade and aid policies coherent with Canada's proclaimed commitment to promoting democratic governance and human rights in Africa? What are Canada and Ghana's responsibilities towards communities affected by mining?

Everything is called "golden" in Ghana (the Gold Coast, Radio Gold, the country's golden jubilee...) but the real gold is nowhere to be seen. For the Ghanaian government and these Canadian mining companies, the silence of local communities is truly golden. In less than a decade Ghana's mineral wealth will have significantly decreased while the potential negative economic, social and environmental impacts of its extraction will be felt for generations to come. This underlines the urgency of the subject matter at hand. But there is hope. Some may say that as long as Canadians have an economic justification for worsening the living conditions of communities affected by mining, the rivers of Ghana's Western region will continue to be contaminated. Such cynical perspectives are undoubtedly unproductive. If local communities continue to be empowered by civil society organizations and governments recognize the significance of effective human rights policies, then important positive changes can occur. Moreover, if we all agree to share some of the power we hold and understand that soon enough these communities' situation will affect us all then perhaps we can find it in our heart to reflect on it farther.

## *The Film*

The film focuses on a community in Western Ghana, Dumasi. The village is affected by the *surface* mining activities of a Canadian company, Golden Star Resources (GSR), registered locally as Bogoso Gold Limited. Traditional small-scale miners have been kicked out of the area by soldiers, as the lands are now owned by the company, greatly affecting the economy of the town. The company's open pits overstep the community's farmlands. Because of the company's activities, two cyanide spillages contaminated the village's main source of water, the Apepre stream. The company provides a standpipe for the community, but the water is also non-potable as chemical reaction occurs when a plantain is dipped into it, turning the water blue-black. Tensions have increased in the past few years as the community have expressed their anger through demonstrations. The government has sent soldiers to the area, who are seemingly there to protect the interests of the company.

We therefore follow the director, as she meets different members of the communities and walks upon unexpected situations. There is Dei and Joanna Nkrumah, father and daughter, who despite being farmers have also become grassroots activists; Nana and Margaret Ofouri, and their 9 children, whose farm was burnt down, possibly by the military; Francis Kwesi Adu-Blay newly elected Assemblyman for Prestea who is outspoken against the activities of GSR; and Alice Frankie, who works for Prestea's crumbling hospital while witnessing the slow decline of her hometown. All characters deal with the situation differently: whether by getting involved in a civil society organisation, participating in local politics, brandishing a machete while calling for a civil war, or by silently reflecting on the growing tensions. But in their own different ways, they are all expressing their anger and frustration, hoping for change. As the film progresses, we learn that the company hopes to resettle the Dumasi community. Although unified in their protests, the different characters seem divided on the issue of resettlement—some hope to find a better life on new lands while others do not want to give up their heritage.

Through the characters' plight, larger questions are reflected upon. In 2007, Ghana celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. The Governor General of Canada makes an official visit to Ghana, stressing Canada's important relationship to this West African country. Canada solidifies its commitment in development aid to the West African country while ignoring the plight caused by Canadian mining activities. Moreover, Canadians' pension plans are being invested on the Toronto Stock Exchange through, among others, shares of Golden Star Resources (GRS). The film travels between Canada and Ghana, and questions to what extent Canadian trade and aid policies are coherent

with Canada's proclaimed commitment to promoting democratic governance and human rights in Africa--what are Canada and Ghana's responsibilities towards communities affected by Canadian mining interests?

*This film is **not** about poor Africans dying.* This film will try to set itself away from the stereotypical African story, where Africans abandon their fate to greater powers. This film is about the resilience of these communities—how people brought to the brink of despair keep on fighting, expressing their anger and trying to do whatever they can to ensure themselves a better future. The characters are people who have been let down by their own government, where soldiers whose salary they pay are brought against them. All the characters are poor, relatively uneducated but eloquent about their grievances and their basic needs. And perhaps most importantly, this is a story that can happen anywhere, in Canada or Africa— a story that shows that we can all find incredible strength within ourselves at the worst times in our lives.

## *Characters*

### Mike Anane

Mike is from the Ashanti region in Ghana, famous for its natural wealth and its hundred-old civilization and where the legend of the “golden stool” originates (see below). The son of a prominent lawyer and local chief, Mike grew up in a family of five. He studied journalism in the capital Accra, and pursued a certificate in environmental conservation education in the UK. Mike represents the other side of the infamous story of the “African brain drain.” Although Mike studied abroad and frequently travels around the continent, he always returns to Ghana, dedicated to environmental and social issues in his country. He is the local representative for an international NGO, FIAN-The Right to Food. He is one of only 4 national activists in Ghana who dedicate their efforts to the issue of mining and human rights. He is married and has a 12-year-old son. He admits that he hopes his son will follow his footsteps. Mike is well-spoken, passionate and charismatic.

### Dei and Joanna Nkrumah

Dei was born in Dumasi and was only five years old when Ghana gained its independence from the British in 1957. The hopes that came with independence were shattered over the years, with surface mining (rather than labour-intensive more environmentally-friendly underground mining) spreading in the area. As far as he can remember, his ancestors have always lived in Dumasi. His wife died only a few years ago.

The eldest of his 7 children, Joanna, has now become the surrogate mother of the family. Joanna is a member of WACAM (Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining) a civil society organization raising awareness about the situation in the district. She represents WACAM in Dumasi and tries to educate her peers about their rights. In November 2006, Joanna traveled to the capital Accra, to meet with Mary Robinson (former President of Ireland and UN Commissioner for Human Rights) at Ghana’s Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) where she exposed the situation in Dumasi. Joanna hopes that Mary Robinson can use her status to help change the situation in Dumasi.

The Nkrumah family depends on farming and on revenues from fish ponds, but is not as poor as the rest of the Dumasi community. They are able to buy packaged water to provide for their needs, instead of using the non-potable water provided by the company. Both Dei and Joanna say that they now fear going to their farms, because of soldiers roaming the area.

### Nana and Margaret Ofouri

Nana and Margaret have a small farm in Dumasi which barely feeds their 9 children. When Mike meets the family, Nana is in a fury—his farm was burnt down the night before, apparently by soldiers acting on behalf of the company. Why, he cannot say. His farm is situated right at the bottom of one of GSR's pits. Enormous rocks often roll down from the rim of the pit, threatening the life of his family and destroying his farmland. Nana says that if no solution is found for the horrible situation his family finds itself in, "there will be bloodshed." Nana wants compensation from the company to be resettled elsewhere.

The Ofouri family is very poor and every day is a constant struggle. Besides portraying the tragedy that afflicts the family, the film will also show their daily life and will focus on their eldest child and the future that awaits him.

### Francis Adu-Blay Koffie

Francis lives in Prestea and has recently been elected as an Assemblyman for the town. He is very outspoken about the situation in the area and knows his facts. He is not afraid to speak out publicly and lobbies the government through letters and reports outlining the main issues affecting Prestea. Francis participated in demonstrations against GSR in 2005 in Prestea, where 7 people were shot. Francis is persistent and hopes to work his way up to help his hometown.

### Alice Frankie

Alice is her mid-40s and is the Chief Cook at Prestea's Hospital. She witnesses the daily impacts of surface mining on the town, and especially on the local hospital. The kitchen she works in crumbled because of the deafening blasts from the surface mining activities of GSR downtown. Alice cannot hide her anger and disgust at the situation in her hometown. She is married with 5 children. Although luckily she is employed, she complains about the lack of jobs in Prestea and how the Canadian company doesn't employ anyone from the town. Alice doesn't participate in local politics, organizations or demonstrations. She observes quietly but warily the situation in Prestea. She also doesn't feel free to go about as she wishes, fearing the random wrath of the military.

*Other secondary characters and appearances:*

Mark Thorpe, Vice President Sustainability, Golden Star Resources (GSR)

After many efforts, Mark Thorpe agreed to let us film on the premises of the mining site. Mike answers our questions carefully and all his answers are seemingly calculated. Still, he cannot hide the company's carelessness and indifference. His defensiveness speaks for itself.

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN Commissioner for Human Rights.

In an exclusive interview, Mary Robinson speaks eloquently of Canada's responsibilities towards communities affected by Canadian mining interests in Ghana. She is visiting Ghana as part of *Realizing Rights* an initiative she founded to raise awareness about business and human rights.

Gavin Hilson, University of Reading

Gavin Hilson has done extensive research in Ghana on the topic over the last 5 years. He spends six months a year living and working in the communities, doing research on small-scale mining.

Kevin D'Souza, Mining Consultant

Kevin D'Souza has worked in Ghana for the past 10 years. He advises government, NGOs and mining companies on a variety of aspects relating to the mining industry and development.

Anna Bossman, Acting Commissioner for Ghana's Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)

Anna Bossman is the communities' strongest ally. She listens to their grievances and hopes CHRAJ can put in place remedial measures.

Nana Andoh, Director for Mining, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ghana

The EPA is apparently inefficient and powerless. Although Nana Andoh doesn't necessarily side with foreign companies, he obviously represents the government and undermines the problematic situation in Dumasi and Prestea.

### *Approach and style*

The visual treatment of the film will evolve as the story unfolds.

The film begins with festive, colorful and humorous images from Ghana's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Audio and images from a live program at Radio Gold, one of Ghana's major independent radio stations, is used as VO and on-camera to illustrate the importance of this day in African history, and to begin establishing the importance of "gold" in Ghana, during colonial times and today, 50 years after independence. This sequence is edited in an upbeat fashion, accompanied by Ghanaian music titled 'Ghana is sweet'.

A short sequence follows where Ghana's historical significance in Africa is explained, using archives from Independence Day in 1957 and official images from the 2007 celebrations.

The Director will appear in some parts of the film, especially in the beginning and in some situations within the communities. During the initial stages of filming, this had been avoided as the story should have been seen only from the perspective of Mike Anane and the inhabitants of the two towns. However, it became a conscious decision as it was quickly realized that the mere presence of a 'foreigner' behind the camera impacted on the situations that were filmed in the towns. Too often in documentaries, the audience is subjected to forget that what it sees may have been different depending on 'who' was behind the camera. Because of the nature of the topic, the director also became tangled in the social tensions within Dumasi, for example when providing the community with the water test results, thus illustrating the impact that a foreign presence can have in African communities.

As the film was shot in three distinct periods in time, during three different trips to Ghana in intervals of three months, the film will be structured according to this timeline. The audience will be able to follow the director's journey and the evolution of her understanding of the complex situation laid out in front of her.

*Part 1:* The first journey is one of discovery, where we meet activist Mike Anane who takes us to Dumasi, unveiling the general issues affecting both communities. Small-scale miners have been removed from land now owned by the mining company. Soldiers have come in the area and a few people were shot during demonstrations. We meet a young man who was shot by soldiers as they were kicking off illegal miners from land owned by the company. As we arrive in Dumasi, farms have been burnt down seemingly by soldiers who may have warned villagers to stay as far away as possible from the mining site. We meet Nana Ofouri, who is in a fury. The community no longer uses the area's main stream because of several cyanide spillages, but the water standpipe provided by the company is inadequate—the water

turns blue-black when in contact with a plaintain. Water samples are collected in Dumasi, to be tested in the UK. A confrontation occurs between one of the company's engineers in charge of monitoring the installation of the standpipe, and the community. Mike's journey will be edited in a quick, fast-paced fashion, giving it an investigative style. Close shots of Mike and the characters will be used to give an impression of intimacy. Visuals of the mine and wide-shots of both towns will be used to give a better perspective on the situation. Subtitles will be used for most of the characters whether they are speaking in the local language, *twi*, or in Ghanaian English.

*In between:* commentary by Gavin Hilson and Kevin D'Souza.

*Part 2:* Three months after our first journey, we return to Dumasi to witness a deteriorating situation, while Ghana is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. As the film goes more in depth into the issues affecting both communities, the general confusion and looming social conflict in both towns come to the surface. The director returns to Dumasi with the alarming test results conducted 3 months before---although she warns the community that these tests may now be outdated, many community members become alarmed and organize a meeting to inform the entire village about the results. However, the water in the community now seems to be potable... As the director becomes tangled in the community's struggle, we witness the growing divisions within the communities, as some accuse others of having their 'silence' bought off by the company. Nana Ofouri is threatened by one of the local chief's representative, for distributing the water test results around the village. Joanna and her father seem to lose their 'voice' and influence within the community, as many attempt to discredit them. In an interview, the VP of the mining company insists that if the water is non-potable in the community, it can only be explained because the villagers are sabotaging it. More water samples are taken for further testing.

In this part, the film focuses on the different emotions expressed by the characters (anger, fear, confusion). Close-ups will be used and visuals from confrontations between some of the villagers will be carefully edited to recreate the atmosphere of outer confusion that prevailed in the town.

*In between:* commentary by experts who explain why such social conflict may occur... Water test conducted, which shows to problems with the water.

*Part 3:* Three months after our second trip to Ghana, we return to find the situation within the village more calm but still precarious. The mining company is holding meetings with the community to discuss its resettlement. The community is divided on the issue. The director takes Joanna and Nana to another community 3 hours away that was resettled the year before by Golden Star. Joanna and Nana are appalled to witness the condition in which the community lives, and decide that they wont let the company resettle Dumasi so easily.

Unfortunately, the audience cannot be physically taken to Ghana to smell, touch, feel the heat and burning sun, thus allowing them to truly understand its human experience. This is where the combination of sounds and visuals will become important in this film. As the issue of 'silence' is also central to the film, 'human' silence combined with ambient sounds will be used when appropriate. I will also use local music from Ghana, and specifically from Dumasi and Prestea, such as young girls of the Ofouri family singing traditional songs.

The film will use narration, in first person, read by the Director.

This is an on-going situation that is filmed throughout a six-month period, and thus ensuring the sustainability of the subject matter. Unfortunately for the current living conditions of the communities, the situation in both towns does not change rapidly.

### ***Director's Note***

In 2002, I worked as a Canadian government junior consultant in Cote d'Ivoire where I witnessed a media deeply implicated in engendering xenophobia and perpetuating political instability. This situation motivated me to found Journalists for Human Rights (JHR)- a Canadian NGO dedicated to empowering journalists to report on human rights issues in Africa. As I managed JHR's project in Ghana in 2004, I came across the issue of Canadian mining companies and human rights for the first time. One of our JHR volunteers, a CBC journalist, produced a short report for Ghanaian television on the water situation in Dumasi and the activities of Golden Star Resources. The company threatened to expulse her from Ghana. I knocked on the door of every laboratory in Accra, public and private, hoping to test the water in Dumasi. Many refused evasively while others laughed at me. No one wanted to be implicated in this controversial situation. As time went by, and our story was aired without any clear answers, the issue became a personal crusade for me. In my own struggle to find answers, I could only begin to imagine the constant struggles the local communities had to go through. I was dedicating all my energy to the activities of a human rights NGO in a country I had learned to cherish. The NGO's activities were partially funded by the Canadian government, while on the other hand Canadian companies were slowly destroying the very communities for whom I had created this NGO for. The contradictions were staggering. I was left perplexed and disturbed. I organized a workshop and debate for journalists, where civil society organizations exchanged views with government officials and mining representatives about the environmental and social issues affecting local communities and discussed possible solutions to these problems. This is where I met Mike Anane, the film's main character.

A few months later, I pursued a Masters in Human Rights where my research focused on the extraterritorial responsibilities of the Canadian government towards communities affected by Canadian mining interests in Ghana. My research received a Distinction from the London School of Economics and Political Science (UK). However, I knew that I would never have any respite until I produced a documentary on the issue. The situation in Western Ghana is a "visual" one. There is no better way to describe the living conditions of these communities than through their personal stories and the environment in which they live. Less than a year after I completed by Masters, the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation in Toronto awarded me a Global Youth Fellowship which finally allowed me to begin working on this film with the aim of targeting the general public and Canadian policymakers.

*When Silence is Golden* is therefore a culmination of 3 years of constant reflections, research and dedication.

This is my first film, but my whole heart is in it. My background in radio journalism, development and human rights will provide me with important tools to complete this film. Earlier this year, Canada's largest francophone magazine *L'actualité* nominated me as one of the "30 Quebecois making a

difference around the world" as part of its special 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue. I do not have the pretense to think that I am about to change the world, but I like to think that I am at least trying to give a voice to the voiceless.

***List of Project's Key Personnel***

*CVs attached*

*Director and Producer:*

Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque (Canada)

*Editor:*

Andrea Henriquez (Canada)

*Camera:*

Dennis Porter (Canada)

Simon Deeley (UK)

Lyndsay Duncombe (Canada)

*Production Assistant:*

Joseph Nyabire Age Fole (Ghana)

## **Distribution/Marketing Strategy**

### *Intended and Target Audience*

Canadian distributor Ciné-Fête has conditionally accepted to distribute the film in Canada and the US. (see letter included)

This 52-minute documentary is intended for distribution in Canada and the US to secondary and post-secondary educational institutions as well as civil society organizations raising awareness about issues relating to human rights and corporate social responsibility in the mining sector.

Negotiations are currently underway with Al-Jazeera English channel in London for broadcasting a short version of the film within their *Witness* program.

The film will also be submitted to a variety of film festivals in Canada, US and UK. It will also be shown in London, UK as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities of the non-governmental organization ARTICLE 19.

#### Post-secondary educational institutions:

The target audience consists of university students studying or interested in human rights, journalism, and international policies. The documentary can be used during 2-hour long seminars, where one hour is dedicated to a discussion on the issues presented in the film. An expert of the film's director could be invited to participate in the discussion. It can also be used outside the classroom, as part of on-campus activities organised by students and professors alike.

#### Secondary educational institutions:

The target audience consists of high school students taking part in extracurricular activities relating to human rights and media. For instance, high school students in Ottawa took part this year in a *Think Fast* initiative launched by the organization *Development and Peace*, where they fasted for 24 hours to raise awareness about the actions of Canadian mining companies in the developing world. The film could be used during such activities. A packet containing information about extractive industries in Africa and Canadian initiatives on the issue will be included. An expert of the film's director could be invited to participate in the discussion.

#### Civil society organizations:

The film can be used by civil society organizations who wish to sensitise a more general audience of policymakers on the topic. It can also be used as part of activities organized in universities, high schools or local communities, to raise awareness about Canadian extractive industries in the developing world and its impact on communities.

*Assessment of Users Audio-Visual Need/Summary of Discussions with End-Users*

The idea for the production of this documentary project stems from three years of in depth research on the topic of Canadian mining interests and human rights in Africa. Academic research conducted at the London School of Economics and Political Science in the UK as well as research in Canada and Ghana, complements interviews and consultations with relevant institutions and civil society groups knowledgeable on the subject matter.

### Educational Community

Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) has been supporting the project from its inception and has committed to include the documentary as part of its nation-wide activities within post-secondary and secondary institutions.

The documentary will be used as part of activities organised by JHR's 22 university chapters across the United States and Canada, in seminars and conferences prepared by students affiliated with JHR. These seminars and conferences are typically two-hour long which allows time for screening the documentary (52 minutes) and a discussion and/or debate period. An expert on the topic or the film's director will be invited to discuss the issues addressed in the film.

Extracts of the documentary will also be posted on JHR's special website for the *Speak Silence* annual awareness campaign organised by JHR university chapters and special screenings of the film will be arranged during the campaign's activities. Printed information will be included with the documentary, for the chapters to distribute, which will explain in detail the different issues raised in the film.

JHR's school chapters are also planning to conduct special activities within secondary schools in their areas and will use the documentary as part of this initiative, to spark off discussions on wider issues that they wish to address with high school students: human rights in Africa and our responsibilities towards the developing world.

### Civil Society Organisations

The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation has agreed to support this documentary through the award of a *Global Youth Fellowship* because it addresses "a very timely topic in Canadian international policy, as the Canadian government has established a series of nation-wide roundtables on the topic of Canadian extractive industries and corporate social responsibility to consult Canadians on what steps need to be taken to improve policymaking on this issue. This documentary will undoubtedly add to the current momentum on the topic across the country and will serve as a catalyst for important discussions and policymaking." (see letter included) The Foundation will therefore endorse a screening of the film in Ottawa, where policymakers and key stakeholders will be present for a discussion on the issues addressed in the film.

Organisations such as JHR, Partnership Africa Canada, Mining Watch Canada and ARTICLE 19 have expressed that issues pertaining to “the relationship between the work of Canadian companies abroad and Canada’s policies on corporate social responsibility” should be analysed in the film. Poverty, loss of livelihood, environmental degradation, policy incoherence and lack of transparency are all issues that the organisations have identified as necessary to address in the film. Moreover, all organisations have stressed the importance of tackling the issue from the perspective of local communities in Ghana, and of presenting the issues raised in a fair and balanced manner. Because this documentary is character-based, it will enable the audience to engage with the topic at a more personal level. But the mining industry’s point of view will also be included, through interviews with the management of the mining company. For Mining Watch Canada, this documentary “will generate first hand knowledge on the topic, from the perspective of members of local communities, rather than from an academic or news-oriented perspective, allowing the audience to directly witness the grievances of the local communities and to understand the implications of large-scale foreign mining operations in the developing world more generally.”

This documentary therefore tackles all the issues identified by civil society organisations working on the topic and wishing to use the subject matter to raise awareness on corporate social responsibility and human rights. For Partnership Africa Canada, “the film will be useful to us in our engagement of Canadians on issues of long-term sustainable development, but it will also have a much wider positive impact on Canada’s international mining community.”

Mary Robinson, former UN Commissioner for Human Rights and now founder of the initiative *Realizing Rights* has emphasised that developed countries must look attentively at the issue of business and human rights. In support of the project, she agreed to participate in a preliminary interview on the topic (see extract in film demo included).

Having lived in Ghana for over a year while working with local media and community organisations, I have witnessed the importance of this complex subject matter. I also gave a presentation at the roundtable on extractive industries and corporate social responsibility organised by Foreign Affairs Canada in Toronto, and I have thus heard the concerns of non-governmental organisations, community groups and mining companies. It is too easy and unproductive to fall in the trap of describing mining companies as a “necessary evil” and not to address the different ramifications of the subject matter at hand. It is also too easy to portray these communities as mere victims. To truly raise awareness of this issue, whether with students, NGOs, policymakers or with the mining community, it is primordial to spend time in the field to understand the perspective of both local communities and the mining industry. By portraying the determination of the different communities, their hopes and fears in a fair and balanced fashion, the documentary will be able to have an impact on international