



PRESS RELEASE

Project Igala objects to plans for Coal Exploration and Mining in Kogi State

Project IGALA, a think-tank of Nigerian intelligentsia of Igala extraction, with membership across six continents, has raised strong objections to proposals contained in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Coal Exploration and Mining in Ankpa, Dekina and Omala LGAs of Kogi State.

In a detailed petition addressed to the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Environment and copied to the Honourable Minister for Environment, John Odey, the Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, The Attah of Igala, Alhaji Aliyu Obaje, Senator Nicholas Ugbane and all Igala representatives in the House of Representatives, Mr Rowland Ataguba on behalf of the Igala Advancement Foundation, parent body of Project IGALA, raised questions about the generic nature of the EIA, the choice of open cast mining method, issues of gas emissions, air pollution, ecological degradation, land and water contamination from mining activities, scant attention to the provision of health facilities and legal issues around the lease of land for use by the mining company. It also raised questions about the quality of the human capital development plans of the mining company for the local communities.

The Objection was the outcome of the collaborative efforts of Project Igala, Igala USA and Igala-UK through a joint technical committee led by Ms Achenyo Idachaba, an expert in clean, sustainable energy solutions and a certified Carbon Reduction Manager.

Project IGALA recommended that a new EIA be conducted because of the "patent lack of integrity and other deficiencies" in the present document. It further suggests that gas emissions and air pollution control should be approached using the BACT (Best Available Control Technology) for a guide. Also, the draft lease agreement is vulnerable to legal challenge because of its patent unfairness, e.g. offering N1m for 500 hectares of land for a potentially high-rewarding commercial endeavour and its several lopsided terms in favour of the lessee. "This is at best unfair to the local communities as the provision of health facilities is a legal obligation associated with the proposed project and clear and concrete plans need to be articulated", they advised.

They further recommended the provision of deep well water supply and water treatment plants for water from the streams and rivers not only for community use but to help reduce the effects of contaminations from runoffs due to the overall mining activities. They also advocated for ambient air monitoring stations to be installed at the mining sites and in the mining communities and surrounding towns plus daily weather monitoring to determine wind direction from mining sites as being essential for communities exposed to wind drift.

They also advocated that the mining company (Western Goldfields Group Ltd) should engage active re-vegetation of exposed soil surface to reduce dust and particulate matter to check erosion and run offs into streams and rivers insisting that the re-vegetation will help in restoring and absorbing toxic chemicals used in the mining process.

According to Mr Ataguba who is also Chairman of the Igala Economic Summit Steering Committee, "the issue of human capital development and empowerment is so fundamental to this cause. The proposals are flippant and appear to assume that the local communities will provide only some labourers and that the mining company can exploit the resources, despoil the environment and leave the people economically worse off. Our response is an emphatic No! They need to have a rethink and come up with credible proposals that address these concerns. Project IGALA welcomes every effort in providing an alternative source of energy but the government and Western Goldfields Group Ltd must realise that there was life before their arrival in these communities and there must be better life after their departure. Synergies between the private sector and our government at both state and federal levels must be responsive to the needs of the people in order to avoid a rehash of the environmental disaster that precipitated the Niger Delta crisis."

Signed.
For: IGALA ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION



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