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Impact of illegal mining and its implication for land reclamation in Amansie South district, Ghana

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Abstract

The Amansie South district is an agrarian area in Ghana endowed with rich mineral resources and a natural environment, facing the devastation of illegal mining activities. Most of the rivers in the area are polluted coupled with large tracts of farms and arable lands that have also been degraded and unrehabilitated. The previous studies on land use change analysis conducted on the study region and other areas with similar challenges have not thoroughly analysed its implication for land reclamation. This case study, therefore, considered in detail the land use and land cover changes in the Amansie South of Ghana and their implication for land reclamation and the urgency to find a lasting solution to illegal mining using land use classifications of 1986, 2015 and 2024 produced with remote sensing techniques and GIS. The quantitative analysis revealed that mined land has expanded rapidly from a mere 0.2% in 1986 to over a third of the district's total land area by January 2024, mostly due to the escalating impact of illegal mining activities. Between 1986 and 2024, the region experienced a significant decrease in farmland-10,000 hectares from 72% to 56% of the total agricultural land. This rapid expansion of mining has significantly reduced the area's agricultural capacity, threatening local food security and the economy. Furthermore, the natural forest cover has also halved in less than a decade from 9,388 ha in 2015 to 4,776 ha in 2024 due to agricultural expansion and illegal mining. These findings clearly imply an urgent need for immediate and effective land reclamation strategies to restore and rehabilitate these areas for future agricultural use and ensure sustainable land use for coming generations

Keywords: Amansie South district, Ghana, illegal mining, implication, land reclamation, land use