

PROJECT REPORT · GHANA

Cleaner Water for Communities Affected by Galamsey, Ghana

Small-scale gold mining has polluted rivers in Ghana's Ashanti Region. With district approvals received in August 2026, Clean Water Help and Nyankonton Aid Foundation are preparing community-made heavy-metal filters and mercury-free mining training.

APPROVED AT DISTRICT LEVEL

UPDATED

September 28, 2026

PARTNER

Nyankonton Aid Foundation

PREPARED BY

Clean Water Help volunteers

WEB

cleanwaterhelp.org/projects/ghana

Clean Water Help is a 100% volunteer-run 501(c)(3) nonprofit (EIN 99-0765687). Founders cover all operating costs, so 100% of public donations go to projects. Numbers are current as of September 28, 2026. Photos are shared by partners with permission; names of private individuals are withheld. impact@cleanwaterhelp.org

At a glance

LOCATION

Ashanti Region, Ghana

PARTNER

Nyankonton Aid Foundation

APPROVED

August 2026, district level

CONTAMINANTS

Mercury, arsenic, lead, cadmium

NEXT

Inception meeting, pilot

CWH LEAD

Dr. Louis Amegbletor

3

local bodies approving or supporting

2

implementation districts

4

local filter materials

500+

mines moved off mercury (PH)

1 Executive summary

KEY FINDING

Local government in two Ashanti Region districts has approved the project, and a third has approved it in principle. The work can now move from paperwork to a pilot: testing water and fish in one or two communities, and building and lab-testing filters made from local materials.

Nyankonton Aid Foundation (NAF) works to restore rivers and livelihoods damaged by galamsey. CWH met NAF in January 2026 and agreed that a small pilot was the right first step. In February, CWH sent NAF a signed partnership letter for local authorities, with four objectives: identify and rank the toxins, make drinking water safer, reduce exposure through food, and reduce mercury and cyanide use.

In August 2026, Atwima Kwanwoma District issued an official letter of support, Amansie West District accepted the project, and Bekwai Municipal Assembly approved it in principle. The regional Health Directorate supports the work but needs national clearance for a formal letter.

What happens next

1. Hold an inception meeting and sign an agreement with the districts.
2. Choose one or two pilot communities with NAF.
3. Sample water, sediment and fish to find the main exposure pathway.
4. Develop and lab-test community filters from local materials.
5. Plan mercury-free mining training with AppelGlobal.

THE ISSUE TO WATCH

Proof that the filters work. Community-made filters are only worth promoting if lab tests show they remove the metals that matter at the concentrations found locally. Testing before and after filtering is built into the pilot.

Key numbers and how solid they are

Each number is labeled by its basis: **MEASURED** counted or tested, **REPORTED** reported by a partner or a document, **RECORD** from our own payments, contracts and correspondence, **ESTIMATE** a calculation or assumption, **PLANNED** a plan or target, not yet done.

ITEM	VALUE	BASIS	SOURCE
Districts approving	Atwima Kwanwoma (letter), Amansie West	RECORD	NAF, Aug 13, 2026
Approval in principle	Bekwai Municipal Assembly	RECORD	NAF, Aug 13, 2026
Contaminants of concern	Mercury, arsenic, lead, cadmium	REPORTED	NAF and literature
WHO guideline, inorganic mercury	6 µg/L	REPORTED	WHO drinking-water guidelines
Budget and beneficiaries	To be set at inception	PLANNED	CWH/NAF

2 Background and progress

The problem

Galamsey is the Ghanaian term for small-scale gold mining, much of it unregulated. In the Ashanti Region it has cleared forest, dug pits, filled rivers with sediment and released mercury and other metals. Communities drink from and fish in these rivers. Health effects reported locally have not yet been measured, which is why testing is the first step.



Land scarred by mining. Photo: NAF



Crossing a river by canoe. Photo: NAF

The partner

Nyankonton Aid Foundation is a Ghanaian foundation based in Kumasi, led by Executive Director Prince Afriyie. It holds a UN SDG partnership, “Restoring Forests, Water Bodies and Livelihoods in Ghana: Tackling Pollution from Galamsey,” and has built relationships with traditional authorities, women’s groups and district assemblies.

“We are very encouraged by this progress and believe that the district-level support will provide a stronger foundation for the collaboration with Clean Water Help.”

Prince Afriyie, Nyankonton Aid Foundation, August 13, 2026

Timeline

Nov 13, 2025	Ghana partner search begins.
Jan 5, 2026	CWH contacts NAF.
Jan 19, 2026	First meeting; agree on a pilot in one or two communities.
Feb 23, 2026	CWH partnership letter signed and sent to NAF.
May 29, 2026	Proposal delivered to Bekwai Municipal Assembly and the regional council.
Jun 8, 2026	CWH proposes health screening and community filters as first steps.
Aug 13, 2026	District approvals received.
Aug 19, 2026	CWH offers to sign an agreement and meet the districts.
Next	<i>Inception meeting; pilot communities.</i>

3 Technical foundation

Community filter concept

The filter concept builds on proven arsenic filters and adapts them for mixed metals, using materials communities can find or make:

LAYER	PURPOSE
Sand	Holds back particles and sediment
Scrap iron filings	Binds arsenic and other metals
Biochar from uncontaminated local plants	Adsorbs mercury and organic contaminants
Bone char	Captures lead and cadmium
Limestone or dolomite (optional)	Raises pH of acidic water

Filters must drain fully between uses so metals are not released back into the water. Each recipe will be tested before and after filtering at a laboratory.

Mercury-free mining

Gravity methods (sluicing, panning and direct smelting with borax) recover gold without mercury. Our partner AppelGlobal has helped more than 500 Philippine mines make this switch. Training in Ghana will focus on recovery and income, because miners adopt what pays.

Decisions and the options we set aside

DECISION	OPTIONS CONSIDERED	WHY
Start with a small pilot	Region-wide program	Prove the filters and approach in one or two communities first.
Local materials	Imported commercial media	Cheaper and sustainable; communities can make more themselves.
Test before promoting	Distribute filters immediately	A filter that does not remove the local metals gives false confidence.

Risks and how we respond

RISK	LEVEL	RESPONSE
Government processes slow the start	Medium	Work through district assemblies that have approved the project.
Filters underperform for some metals	Medium	Lab testing; adjust recipes.
Lab testing costs	Medium	Seek grants; partner labs.
Association with illegal mining	Medium	Work with communities and legitimate small-scale miners only.

4 What we learned and what is still open

- **Approvals take time.** It took from February to August 2026 to secure district support; that groundwork makes the pilot possible.
- **Cross-learning helps.** Methods proven in the Philippines can be adapted for Ghana.

Open questions

- Is drinking water or fish the main mercury exposure route in the pilot communities?
- Which local biochar sources work best and are not contaminated?
- Which Ghanaian laboratories can test metals affordably?

5 How you can help

Help communities clean up their water

Gifts fund testing, filter materials and lab analysis. Mercury and mining experts are welcome to join the team.

- Contact: impact@cleanwaterhelp.org

References and sources

1. Nyankonton Aid Foundation. UN SDG Partnership: Restoring Forests, Water Bodies and Livelihoods in Ghana (sdgs.un.org).
2. Clean Water Help and NAF. Proposal for Collaborative Partnership (February 23, 2026).
3. Atwima Kwanwoma District Assembly. Letter of acceptance and support (August 2026).
4. World Health Organization. Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality.