



Local communities a neglected partner in exploration and mining ventures

Dyson Moses

Turkey (dysonmoses@gmail.com)

LOCAL COMMUNITIES A NEGLECTED PARTNER IN EXPLORATION AND MINING VENTURES

By D.N.M Moses

Abstract

Most geological ventures overlook the locals when agreements are being made and even during the course of the exploration and/or mining activities. Geological teams are mostly obsessed with getting licences from the government with little or no consultations being made with locals in the area in which the project will be effected. The tendency leaves the communities uninformed and sidelined. Corollary, geological projects encounter resistance from the locals

One such cases in Malawi is the “Spring Stone Limited against Concerned Citizens” case. The government of Malawi awarded exploration licence to Spring Stone Limited a company which is exploring for Rare Earth Elements (REE) at Chambe Basin in Mulanje, Malawi. The award of the controversial licence was coupled with the fact that the company did not launch an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This development prompted a group of “Concerned Citizens”, led by Nowa and Kalindo, to take the company to court over alleged destruction to the environment through prospecting activities. The court initially handed a temporary court injunction before a permanent injunction was sought by the group of Concerned Citizens. Spring Stone then ceased its REE exploration project which was in its second drilling phase. However After some time Spring Stone Limited went to court seeking vacation of the court injunction halting their activities and the court ruled in their favour and they immediately announced resumption of exploration activities in the area. An attempt by the “concerned citizens” to have the courts overrule the vacation of the injunction yielded nothing. In spite of court’s verdict being upheld the group went on to issue an ultimatum to Spring Stone to halt its exploration activities and they threatened to use any means available to coerce the company vacate the mountain. Further to that they reportedly contacted the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon for intervention since they felt let down by government. The development prompted Spring Stone to temporarily halt its activities as they sought assurance of their safety at the anger of the communities from courts