

Responds By Hon Alweendo.

**National Assembly, Notice of Question No.130**

**QUESTION BY HON HENNY H. SEIBEB, LPM**

The questions by Hon. Seibeb relate to the issue of lead exposure among infants and children in Rosh Pinah. The Honourable member indicated there are allegations of evidence linking exposure to lead and the mining company, Trevali Mining Corporation. Trevali Mining Corporation has allegedly been covering up the potential lead exposure. He indicated that there is a medical report that reveals the findings of lead concentration tests conducted on 30 children who all exhibited high levels of lead in their blood. The tests were apparently conducted by a medical doctor who was previously employed by the company and that the employment contract was terminated abruptly.

I commend and thank the Hon Member for the question. The question is about an important issue – that of health related to mining activities. All mining activities are prone to dangers such as health and safety not only for the employees but also for the community where mining operations take place. That it is why as part of the licensing process, all mining companies are required to have strict health and safety plans for their operations. I therefore want to state that the Government will not in any way or shape cover up issues related to health and safety in the mining sector.

Let me now share more information as follows. In February 2020, Rosh Pinah Zinc Corporation conducted a soil sampling study to assess the lead and arsenic concentrations in the residential soil to determine Blood Lead Levels (BLL) and potential lead exposure in children in the areas of concern. This was primarily at the eastern side of the management housing, golf course and Bel-EI residential area.

In June 2020, the company initiated a study to determine the levels of lead in children of families that resided in the Bel-EI residential area. Blood Lead Levels of those tested were shared at all levels of the mine operations. The testing continues for Be-EI families and monitoring takes place monthly. The area adjacent to the mine was fenced off to prevent children from entering the affected area and an alternative safer place was identified and a playpark was built.

The mine also carried out a lead awareness campaign at the local schools and distributed lead awareness pamphlets to the community. The Rosh Pinah Health Care study demonstrated that the blood lead levels of all children sampled and measured as part of the lead programme were above the reference level, constituting quantified lead exposure and quantified lead absorption. About 20% of children sampled and who are on the lead programme have shown bio effect of lead absorption with adverse effects although no acute effects demonstrated.

After the exposure was brought to our attention, we convened a meeting with the company and the meeting was also attended by officials from the Ministries of Health and Labour to discuss the matter. During that meeting, the company confirmed that the report does indeed exist. Given that the Ministry of Health is the competent authority on health matter, it was concluded that the report be submitted to the Ministry of Health. I am informed that the Ministry of Health and the company are addressing the recommendations in the report to manage the situation.

To find a lasting solution, the Ministries of Mines and Health continues to engage the company to carry out extensive studies, after which key conclusions and recommendations will be made on how to address the lead exposure on children at Rosh Pinah.

I hope I have responded to the satisfaction of the Hon. Member.