



## Occupational health centre at Iduapriem mine extended to provide improved facilities

Iduapriem mine, located 85km north-west of the port city of Takoradi in western Ghana, is making full use of its on-site occupational health centre, the Sam Jonah Clinic. Constructed during 2003 and 2004, and formally opened in November 2006, the health centre caters for the mine's employees and contractors (currently around 1,800 people), as well as emergency cases for the eight communities, comprising some 7,400 people, in the vicinity of the mine.

The centre offers primary health care, including minor surgical procedures following the commissioning of a theatre; medical surveillance of occupational diseases (for example, noise-induced hearing loss); medical examinations; voluntary counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS; general counselling (including family planning); and a health education programme for mine workers.

Although smaller than other medical facilities in the district, the centre is well-equipped, boasting a laboratory and ECG, spirometry (to measure lung function) and audiometry facilities. The clinic also has its own ambulance to transport emergency cases – generally of a surgical nature – from the mine site to the district capital 10km away or, where necessary, to a teaching hospital.

Dental and obstetric cases are referred to a district dentist and the local Tarkwa hospital respectively, while patients with eye conditions are referred to an optometrist for prescription spectacles in the case of refractory error, or to an ophthalmologist where an eye disease, for example, glaucoma is detected.

The health centre, which falls under Iduapriem mine's health, safety and environmental department, is currently run by a resident medical officer who is registered with Ghana's medical and dental council. The centre is staffed by the Occupational Health Superintendent, assisted by an occupational health nurse, three senior registered nurses and three staff nurses.

A rigorous occupational health service is provided to employees and contractors, including entry, exit and periodic medical examinations that include monitoring for noise induced hearing loss, occupational lung disease, radiation monitoring (for potentially exposed employees), food handler examinations and screening for diabetes and cardio-vascular problems amongst drivers. In August 2007, the centre launched a new Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) programme to add impetus to its HIV/AIDS programmes (*See [www.aga-reports.com/07/VCT-Iduapriem.htm](http://www.aga-reports.com/07/VCT-Iduapriem.htm)*). The centre is a government health authority accredited VCT centre.

Treatment is free of charge for employees and their dependents as well as for emergency cases from the communities, while contractors are responsible for their respective employees' costs. Despite being a small centre, more than 14,000 patients, presenting mainly with malaria, respiratory tract infections and musculo-skeletal pains, were treated during the year.

The centre is currently being upgraded at a cost of some \$80,000, with the building housing the centre planned to double in size by the end of 2008. This will facilitate the smooth running of the centre, upgrade and extend the dispensary area, allow it expand the range of services it offers, increase patient privacy through better allocation of space, and deal with the current rise in contractors. Provision has also been made for an x-ray facility.

Environmentally friendly procedures, including among others the disposal of clinical waste and expired drugs, have assisted the Iduapriem mine retaining its ISO 14001 certification, first granted in December 2003 and recertified in December 2006.