

Geared for West African upturn

As the economic mood in the global mining industry turns towards the better, SRK Consulting's Accra office in Ghana has been making inroads into new markets in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo.

According to SRK Ghana country manager John Kwofie, there is potential for improved investor interest in Ghana itself, as the country's new government takes a more proactive approach to attracting investment. The new administration has stated its intention of making Ghana the most business-friendly country in Africa and has begun focusing on reducing the cost of electricity, making tax rates more attractive, and easing the process of registering a business.

"The plan is to create an environment in which businesses can flourish, by reducing corporation tax and attracting new investors," says Kwofie. "Household and corporate electricity tariffs have been decreasing, and the key economic indices are improving — so there is reason to be optimistic," Kwofie adds.

As one of the leading members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ghana is positioning itself as a West African hub for sectors like aviation, but faces competition from the likes of Nigeria and Senegal. Among the government's efforts to ignite economic activity, is the 'One District, One Factory' initiative launched in 2016, promising a factory in each of Ghana's 216 districts. As SRK already services the industrial sector — especially in water management — the company will continue to explore this space.

As the key West African practice of SRK's global network of engineers and scientists, the focus of the Ghana office is on geotechnical work — assisting clients with open-pit slope stability analysis and work on tailings dams, as well as foundation investigations. However, it leverages the broad mining, environmental, infrastructure, oil and gas, water, and energy expertise from the group's other offices around the world.

The office is a springboard to other countries in the region where the group is active, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The intention is to grow SRK's Ghana office into a hub to take advantage of the company's footprint and regional network.

"Our recent work in Côte d'Ivoire was an open-pit slope stability study for a gold mining client, where our office conducted a pre-feasibility study initially," he said. "We were then requested to take the study to the next level with a detailed pit feasibility study, which we conducted in collaboration with our colleagues in SRK's United Kingdom office in Cardiff."

In Togo, the Ghana office and its associates recently completed a mineral evaluation for a dimension stone project. The marble and granite operation required the team to use existing drilling data



John Kwofie, country manager at SRK Consulting Ghana.

to model the resource and to provide estimates including inferred, indicated, and proven resources — as well as net present value for the resource. In the environmental sector, the office is already able to channel SRK's expertise in environmental and social impact assessments, resettlement, and visual and economic assessments to the wider region. Looking ahead, Kwofie suggests that Liberia may be a country to watch in terms of mining potential, having seen its first gold mine developed and operational a couple of years ago. There are new mines afoot in Senegal and Mali, too, he says, where quite a number of mining operations are already up and running.

"All our involvement in West Africa has generally been in gold — except in Guinea where it's been in gold and bauxite, and in Sierra Leone where iron ore and diamonds are the focus," says Kwofie. He noted that the ongoing attention paid to the world-class bauxite deposit at Nyinahim — which has been explored and talked about for decades — still presents an exciting opportunity for Ghana.

"This is probably one of the largest bauxite deposits in the world, which could rival the Simandou find in Guinea," he said.

The office's commodity involvement is expanded through its collaboration with other SRK offices, which draws it into minerals such as copper and also into countries in other regions of Africa such as Cameroon, Sudan, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and the DRC.

