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**Profitable** A lot of mines sand in River Kochi in Yumbe District last week, photo by ROBERT ELEMA

## Sand miners degrade River Kochi

### Goldmine.

The youth, who are engaged in sand mining, say it is a lucrative business that they ventured into to improve their livelihood.

BY ROBERT ELEMA  
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**YUMBE.** River Kochi, which provides water for irrigation and home consumption for residents in Yumbe District, is being degraded due to uncontrolled sand mining.

Some youth in the district have discovered sand mining as a lucrative venture and spend most of their time engaging in the illegal activity at the watch of district authorities.

When *Daily Monitor* visited the river that runs from South Sudan through Yumbe District at Kochi Sub-county last week, a sizeable area of the river bank had caved in. Also, the reeds that protect the river from desilting had been cut down to pave way for sand mining.

Mr Rashid Dujango, one of the miners, said they engage in the activity to make ends meet.

He said sand mining is a profitable business that has turned around their livelihood.

# Shs30,000

A FULL TIPPER LORRY OF RIVER SAND  
COSTS BETWEEN SHS25,000 AND  
SHS30,000.

"Sand mining business is booming this time because a lot of construction works are taking place in Yumbe Town, especially at refugee camps and in other parts of the district," Mr Dujango said.

He said a full tipper lorry of river sand costs between Shs25,000 and Shs30,000 depending on the quality.

"Before we started mining sand, we first consulted the elders of the area over 10 years ago, who later gave us a go ahead to mine sand. This activity has become our major source of income," he said.

### Degradation

The district environment officer, Mr Swaib Andama, said: "Such activities can degrade the river bank, cause soil erosion and lead to floods."

"Sand mining is wrong as it degrades the environment. There should be a deliberate effort to gazette land outside the river bank where people mine sand like is the case with River Enyau in Arua District," he said.

He said sand mining should be carried out 30 metres away from the river bank and the vegetation should be left intact.

Due to sand mining, Kochi Bridge is exposed to collapse as there is no soil to hold the deck according to him.

Mr Haruna Alamiga, the Yumbe District secretary for environment, condemned the youth for engaging

in illegal activities, warning that this must stop.

"We have never given the green light for anyone to mine sand. We are afraid that it might result into a catastrophe since the bridge that cuts across the river is exposed. We shall swing into action and arrest and prosecute anyone found mining," he said.

He said whoever wished to engage in the activity needed to have a licence issued with specific instructions on which areas are gazetted for such.

**"We have never given the green light for anyone to mine sand. We are afraid that it might result into a catastrophe since the bridge that cuts across the river is exposed,"** HARUN ALAMIGA, YUMBE DISTRICT SECRETARY FOR ENVIRONMENT

Mr Bernard Ayimani, the district engineer, said assessment should be done by the environment department because many bridges are going to be affected if people are not restrained from sand mining.

"We have four major bridges on River Kochi on Yumbe side, which are likely to be affected by this activity. Sand mining will widen the sides of the river, which will eventually leave the bridges hanging. We ask the environment department to take action to stop the activity," he added.

## briefly

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