

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Bank of Uganda governor
sovereign. The potential of

EDITORIAL

Karamoja tragedy is a warning to Uganda

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development halted all gold-mining activities in Kaabong, Karamoja Sub-region following the collapse of the mines, killing two people. The collapse is another painful reminder of the dangers that continue to define Uganda's artisanal mining sector. It exposes a deeper, long-standing problem: mining areas across the country remain perilous workplaces where survival is often left to chance.

From gold pits in Karamoja to stone quarries on the outskirts of Kampala, it is clear that for many Ugandans, mining is a gamble with death.

Across the country, similar collapses have buried workers alive, often in silence, sometimes with little more than a brief mention in local news. The affected districts include Wakiso, Mukono, Busia and Buhweju, among others.

Informal mining sites are typically poorly structured, lacking basic safety reinforcements, proper ventilation, and regulated excavation practices. The result is predictable: frequent collapses, injuries, and fatalities.

The issue:

Artisanal mining.

Our view:

If Uganda is to benefit from its mineral wealth, it must also protect the people who extract it.

The Kaabong incident is part of a broader pattern seen in districts like Busia and Buhweju, where artisanal miners operate under hazardous conditions. Across these regions, workers descend into fragile pits with minimal protective gear, driven by the hope of striking gold. The risks are well known, yet the cycle continues.

The government's decision to suspend activities at the Kaabong site is a necessary immediate response, but it is not a solution. The response to such tragedies has been largely reactive. Authorities close sites after deaths occur, only for operations to resume elsewhere under the same dangerous con-

ditions. This cycle of disaster, closure, and quiet resumption is a policy failure that costs lives.

Therefore, there must be stricter regulation and consistent monitoring of mining operations. Authorities, including the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, must ensure even small-scale miners adhere to basic safety standards. This includes reinforcing tunnels, limiting unsafe excavation practices, and mandating the use of protective equipment.

Formalisation of artisanal mining should be accelerated. When miners are organised into cooperatives and granted legal recognition, it becomes easier to train them, regulate their activities, and provide access to safer technologies. Informality, by contrast, breeds neglect and risk.

There is also an urgent need for education and training. Many miners are unaware of the full extent of the dangers they face or the methods that could reduce those risks. Safety training should be central to any mining activity.

The country must confront the broader issue of economic vulnerability. As long as communities have limited livelihood options, people will continue to risk their lives in unsafe mines. Investment in alternative income-generating activities is essential to reduce overreliance on artisanal mining.

If Uganda is to benefit from its mineral wealth, it must also protect the people who extract it. Otherwise, each new mining site risks becoming another tragedy waiting to happen.

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