

Mubende miners jubilate as artisanal gold mining resumes

By Edward Kayiwa

More than 500 small scale artisanal gold miners in Mubende are now smiling after being issued three location licences by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, enabling them to return to work.

The licences were awarded to Kayonza-Kitumbi Miners Association to mine gold in an estimated 13.5 hectares at Bukuya sub-county in Mubende district.

The miners had been evicted more than three months ago by the energy ministry on grounds of environmental degradation, rising crime and the need to restore order for a regulated business.

However, with the help of the Government, the Kayonza-Kitumbi Miners Association registered and formalised their operations.

According to Zakaria Baguma, the acting director of geological survey and mines, the new location licenses prohibit the use of mechanised operations, crushing and mulling and the use of mercury and cyanide.

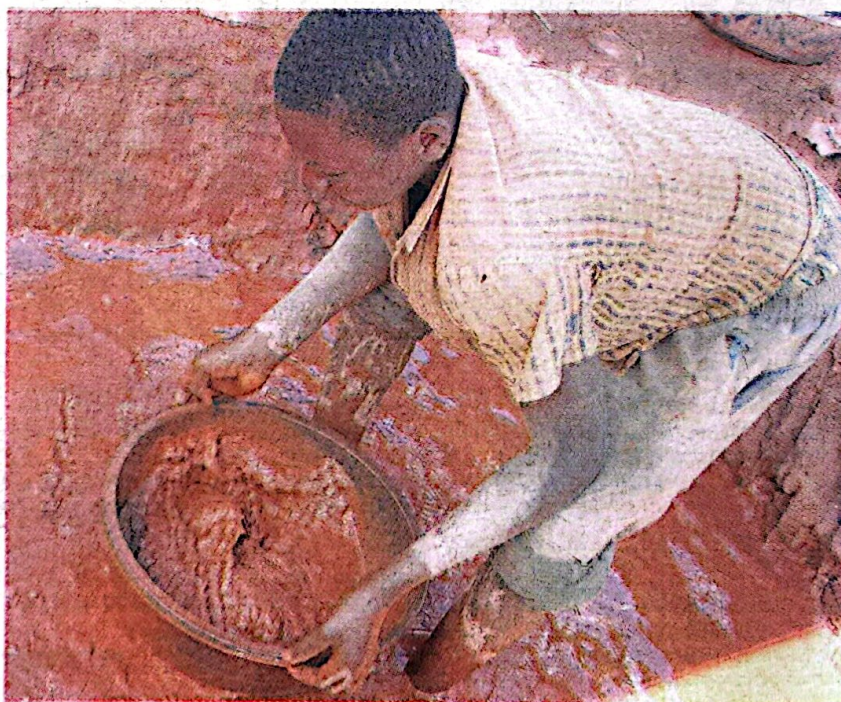
"If you want to go mechanised, speed up the process of acquiring a mining lease which will give you the desired mining rights," he advised the miners, during the handing over of the mining licences.

Baguma said the Government put a moratorium for three months to ensure that illegal unregistered miners and foreigners are removed from the mines.

"We also wanted to bring Police on board and I am glad to report that we now have a Mines Police Division," he said.

Mubende district has seven gold mines in Kitumbi and Bukuya sub-counties that have witnessed emergence of small townships populated by labourers and traders seeking to eke out a living at the mines and from auxiliary businesses.

The commissioner for mines, Agnes Alaba, advised the miners to fulfill the requirements of the Mining Act 2003 to



A man slicing crashed rock powder in water mixed with mercury to get gold

quicken the process of acquiring a mining lease.

"For one to have a Mining Lease, you must carry out a feasibility study, acquire surface rights from land owners, and undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment approved by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)," she said.

According to the Energy and Mineral Sector Performance Report 2016/17, more than 5,000 miners and workers have been trained in environmental conservation, community, and health safety in the mining sector.

The report identifies lack of mechanisation and informal operations as hindrances to data collection, to accurately determine how much the artisanal and small scale

mining (ASM) sector plays in economic growth and rural development.

According to the energy ministry sources, procurement of a consultant to map, register, train and develop ASM database, which will be integrated with the biometric database, has been initiated.

The database will give the Government a means to monitor and manage domestic ASM sector and the ability to analyse economic, social and environmental impacts that can inform policy decisions in the future.

It will also give the private sector a gateway to critical information to ensure transparency of supply chains and ways to collaborate better with partners on corporate social responsibility.