

# Kaolin extraction in Rakai neglected

Stalled. Efforts to get investors to extract the mineral has so far failed. District officials partly blame this on the lack of electricity and water facilities in the areas where the kaolin deposits are located.

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Not utilised. Men inspect a section of a hill containing kaolin in Rakai District recently. PHOTO BY IVAN KIMBOWA

In 2005, government geologists surveyed different kaolin deposits in Kagamba, Kyarulangira, Ddwaniro, Iyusakanda, Iwamagawa and other sub-counties in Rakai District in preparation for exploitation. The deposits estimated to be 1.3 million tonnes, were expected to transform lives of more than 15,000 people in these sub-counties and spur development once the extraction process commenced.

A technical report was released by Mr Vincent Kato, a former commissioner at Department of Geological Survey and Mines in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, in 2005.

Like the ongoing Uganda-Tanzania oil pipeline project, residents believe that kaolin would revive their communities if fully utilised.

However, government has failed to get potential investors and resources to extract the kaolin.

Kaolin is a multi-purpose industrial mineral used to make paint, paper, tiles, bath tabs, sinks, insecticides, herbicides, paper, soap and ink, among others.

Mr Robert Kasande, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, says still lack vital information about kaolin deposits.

He advises private investors to go to the ministry and geological de-

partment for clearance. "They can get a licence to extract and process it (kaolin). But as the ministry, we are not yet satisfied with the results in the meantime," Kasande says.

Equally, the district and Kooki chiefdom have tried to identify potential investors for the lucrative business, but their efforts have been futile.

Mr William Katongole, 49, a resident of Binoni Village in Ddwaniro Sub-county, is among residents who were expecting to be employed and earn a fortune in the kaolin extraction process.

But 20 years along the way, his hopes gradually faded when the project implementation failed. And yet most of the soils are too poor for

farming.

"Initially, we could dig it up and sell it. A big truck could go for Shs150,000. A big truck could go for Shs200,000. This had been a source of livelihood, especially for the unemployed youths," he recounts.

The biggest part of Ddwaniro Sub-county is covered by kaolin, land on which the sub-county headquarters

sits, while other sub-counties also have clusters of various small and big deposits.

Its terrain is mainly hilly and rocky, barely enabling the cultivation of crops such as banana, beans, maize, sweet and Irish potatoes except in the valleys and wetlands.

Mr Ericad Sande, a farmer in Binoni, explains that due to poor soils

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# for 20 years



Mr Godfrey Kimbugwe



Mr Tom Yiga Mulindwa



Mr Robert Benon Mugabi



Mr Amos Mandella

In Binoni, they are usually forced to hire land in the neighbouring communities to cultivate crops.

"I have over 20 acres of land with kaolin which is not exploited yet the mineral has a huge economic value for the residents in this sub-county and the district. It makes me feel bad since it's lying under our feet," he says.

Mr Tom Yiga Mulindwa, the Local Council (LC)3 chairperson of Ddwaniro, says since 2015 different teams from the central government and China have been inspecting the deposits.

"Between 2007 and 2009 geologists took several trucks of kaolin at one of the biggest site in Binoni Village claiming to carry out more surveys, but we have never heard from them since," Mr Mulindwa says.

These villages are still backward in terms of infrastructure development, which Mulindwa attributes to the neglected kaolin extraction project.

Although these communities lack electricity to support the prospected

extraction, the residents believe with government interventions it is possible to extend the lines once the project kicks off.

Mr Robert Benon Mugabi, the LC5 chairperson, believes that once kaolin extraction begins, it will boost local industry and also provide employment for thousands of Ugandans.

Currently, 38,958 youth in the district are unemployed, according to the 2014 Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) National Population and Housing Census.

Mr Mugabi says if the government had taken the initiative to extract and process kaolin shortly after the survey 20 years ago, then the district would be in position to generate enough revenue to support different services.

Mr Erasmus Mugumya Magulumaali, the chairperson of veteran soldiers and former Kooki County MP, has been following the kaolin matter since its discovery in 1980s.

He attributes the failed extraction to lack of electricity and water exten-



West. Rakai District is estimated to have 1.3 million tonnes of kaolin.

sion to the deposits as well as good infrastructure.

This, he explains, has scared away potential investors who would extract and process the mineral.

He told *Sunday Monitor* that several investors picked interest in the project but were discouraged by the heavy investment that is required to extend electricity to the area where the kaolin deposits are located.

"The mineral has been lying ideal for many years. We have been waiting for government to extract it. Even the Chinese investors whom we thought were interested are reluctant over a number of issues," Mr Magulumaali explains.

It is estimated that Uganda spends more than Shs30 billion annually to import kaolin products.

Mr Magulumaali says the money spent on importing kaolin projects would be spent on other priority items if extraction and processing of kaolin begins.

Mr Amos Mandella, the Member of Parliament for Buyamba County, were most of the kaolin deposits are located, says Ddwaniro Sub-county has the biggest quantities of the mineral.

He adds that although plans of extraction are not yet in place, the deposits are mentioned on the list of minerals for exploitation.

"In our last meeting with the President at Kyankwanzi, kaolin was also

## OTHER SOURCES

Apart from Kooki in Rakai District, several medium and small-scale reserves of kaolin are found in Mutaka in Bushenyi District, Namasera, Buwamba and Migade near Kampala, and Bukaragama near Kileleshwa in Kasasa District.

At present, small-scale mining and processing is being carried out but there is increasing demand for kaolin for use in industries, machine, ceramics etc.

listed among the minerals that may attract potential investors. However, we are thinking about a move to train our people to start making simple materials (from kaolin)," he explains.

He urges institutions in the area to introduce course related to the extraction and making of things out of the mineral to enable people benefit from its presence.

Kooki chiefdom in partnership with the district administration had formulated plans of extracting the mineral, but several factors including, access to water, electricity and

topography hindered the plan.

Mr Stanley Ndawula, the Kooki chiefdom information minister, says the kaolin issue was included in the county's five-year plan.

He adds that they are still looking for investors to extract and process the mineral.

Mr Godfrey Kimbugwe, the Kooki deputy prime minister, explains that Kooki has large quantities of kaolin which will create more than 10,000 jobs when extraction starts.

He says both skilled and unskilled labourers, including miners, surveyors, transporters, cooks, cleaners, security guards, engineers, among others will benefit from the project.

"Kooki is rich in kaolin and other heritages which are yet to be utilised. We have included it in different proposals and sent to UK, Asia and Arab countries inviting investors to come and explore it. We hope to get positive feedback," he says.

## Paint manufacturers speak

Mr Steven Kayiwa, the director of Global Paints, one of the leading paints manufacturing companies, explains that they import kaolin clay from different countries, including China.

He says importation of kaolin increases the cost of making paint, adding "our expenses will go down when kaolin extraction in Kooki and elsewhere commences.

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