

UGANDA CAN EXTRACT GOLDEN TIPS FROM RWANDAN MINES

Whereas the Ugandan artisanal miners rely on rudimentary, risky methods to get the precious metals, in Rwanda the sector has long been formalised

By John Odyek in Rwanda

Uganda's artisanal miners do not have much going for them. They live in deplorable conditions and are at the bottom of the food chain as middlemen and mineral exporters enjoy the profit. For instance, in Lujuni, a mining village in Mubende district, a 20-litre jerrycan of water fetched miles away costs sh1,000. The only pit latrine — an abandoned mining pit that is hardly cleaned — goes for sh500, leaving many to opt for the bush or open defecation.

The miners' activities are also not regulated by the Government. The contribution of artisanal mining to the country's coffers is not clear. According to Robert Sempebwa, the chairperson of Singo Artisanal Small Scale Miners Association that currently has 1,250 members, all his members are not licensed.

"Most of the mining equipment is in millions of dollars. Though we too desire to make these workplaces safer, we are not quite sure of tomorrow to invest such large sums of money," he says.

Due to the fact that they are

not licensed, life and work practices are determined by the different loose associations.

Uganda's artisanal miners are mainly involved in gold mining. According to a 2012 United Nations Environmental Programme study on artisanal mining in Uganda, at least 20,000 people are engaged in artisanal gold mining, and this has become an important economic activity, especially in the eastern, western and southwestern regions of the country.

Given the informal nature of artisanal mining, there is no concrete data on its contribution to the overall gold production in the country. However, available data shows that in 2008, unlicensed, informal gold production from over 15,000 miners was estimated at over 1.2 tonnes valued at \$28.5m.

The visit

A team of artisanal miners from Kampala last week visited a number of mines in Rwanda to establish how the country is handling the same venture.

The team visited several mines in Rwanda and found that many of the challenges Uganda is grappling with have been addressed, and mining activities there are formalised.

As a result, mining is the second foreign

exchange earner in Rwanda after tourism.

Rwanda exports gold, tin, tantalite and tungsten. Other minerals such as nickel, chromium, cobalt, lead, zinc, uranium, thorium and lithium are under exploration.

Venant Nanzimfura, the Rwanda team leader for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) explained that Rwanda is integrating the artisanal and small

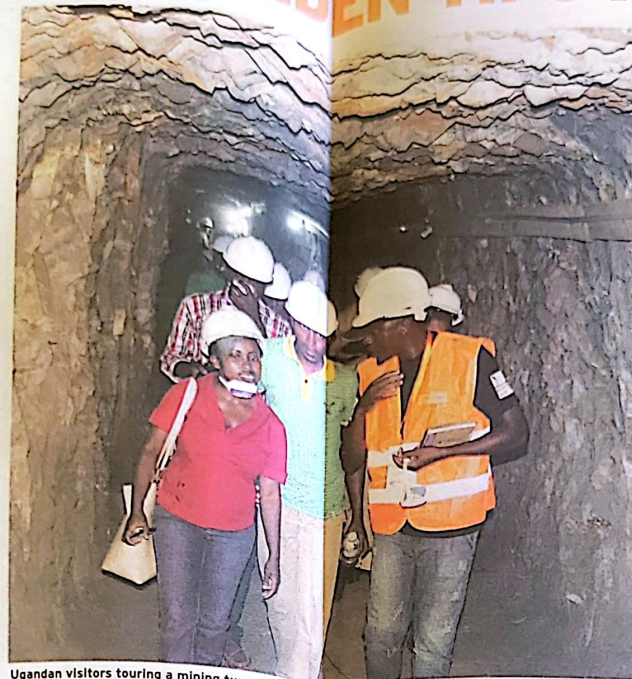
"From illegal mining and poor washing methods we work towards safe tunnels and modern washing plants." Ildephonse Niyonsaba

scale mining sector into the formal economy.

Nanzimfura, who also works with the Rwanda Standards Board, explained that a Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) was developed to tackle the issue of conflict minerals, which Rwanda embraced.

The main focus of the RCM is on four minerals, namely tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold referred to as 'conflict minerals' under the July 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

It requires companies to disclose whether any of the products manufactured or contracted to be manufactured by the company contains conflict minerals that originate in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or any of the 10 adjoining countries, including Uganda. It makes it difficult to trade in minerals



Ugandan visitors touring a mining tunnel in Rwanda recently

that were not certified to be 'conflict free'.

The RCM requires formalisation of the artisanal and small scale miners sector to enable the tracking and certification of the minerals.

Nanzimfura revealed that 100% of artisanal miners in Rwanda are formalised and have licences.

The sector employs 155,000 people directly and indirectly in a population of 12 million people.

Benefits of formalisation
Nanzimfura says formalising enables miners to get good prices on the international market as well as attract investments. It also ensures

more employment, stops smuggling and fraud. On top of that, more tax revenues are collected; best practices adopted, leading to better social-economic livelihoods.

Frank Butera from the Rwanda Mining Association said the government is investing heavily in exploration and is developing model



Miners drilling walls in search of minerals in Rwanda. Photos by John Odyek

mines as places to train local miners in best practices.

The mining sector in Rwanda has over 480 companies composed of mining, trading companies and co-operatives. Butera said all the artisanal miners are encouraged to join and form co-operatives or companies.

He said each mine contributes to community development/projects, employment of locals, medical insurance and support in case of injuries and death in mines.

The Uganda energy ministry permanent secretary, Stephen Isaballia, recently said the review of the Mining Act and policy is in advanced stages, and the process will be concluded as soon as possible.

"We should have the policy and law soon. Yes, we need to regulate the mining industry," he added. One of the critical issues in the review process is regulation and legalisation of the activities of the artisanal miners.

Transparency initiatives
Rwanda has a mineral tagging system that tracks minerals from the time of

extraction to sale on the market.

Ildephonse Niyonsaba, a project manager in Rwanda, said the system ensures access to fair and competitive markets for miners. It ensures miners earn a dignified living and build a better future for themselves and their families.

"From illegal mining and poor washing methods, we work towards safe tunnels and modern washing plants," Niyonsaba said.

Mirko Liebetrau, the manager certification formalisation Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of German Development Agency, said the organisation helps countries develop fingerprints for rocks, so that the origins of any mineral can be traced.

Liebetrau said global consumers have become sensitive to conflict minerals and human and child labour abuses.

UGANDA BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) is a semi-autonomous agency of Government responsible for maintenance of the National Statistical System to ensure the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical information.

The Bureau has a dual role as the principal statistics producing agency and coordinator of the National Statistical System (NSS). The Bureau seeks to recruit highly competent, motivated, results oriented and dynamic team players of good character and high integrity for the position of Driver.

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Ref: UBOS/HRM/2017/01
Salary scale: UBOS P5
Reports to: Transport Officer

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Experience and other essential attributes
A minimum of five years of Accident-free driving with experience in a credible organisation.
Experience in public entities or Government establishment will be an added advantage.
Not exceeding 45 years of age at the time of applying.

Knowledge of applicable Uganda traffic laws and regulations.
Ability to work effectively with other employees.
Ability to maintain accurate and confidential records.
Excellent communication skills.
Knowledgeable in computer application.
Should be self-driven, motivated and ready to work for long hours.

Perform any other duties as may be assigned.

Note:
(i) Female applicants are encouraged to apply.
(ii) All tendered in documents will be verified with the relevant authorities.
(iii) Any falsification of documents will lead to prosecution.
(iv) Any form of lobbying will lead to automatic disqualification.

MODE OF APPLICATION AND DEADLINE

Candidates with the requisite qualifications should send their applications with a detailed Curriculum Vitae together with copies of academic certificates in a sealed envelope clearly stating the job title applied for on the top right corner. Indicate at least 3 referees. Applications should be received not later than 21st July 2017 at 05:00pm.

Applications should be addressed to:

LESSONS FROM ACROSS THE BORDER

We want mining conditions to change in Uganda - study group

Morris Tabaro, the Inspector of mines, geological survey and mines department in Rwanda, said it is inspiring to see how Rwanda has transformed its artisanal miners into the formal sector. "We have a problem with formalisation in Uganda. But we have learnt how they did it," Tabaro noted.

He further said Rwanda uses funds from the mining industry to fund activities relating to regulations and implementation.

Peninah Businye, an artisanal miner from Mtungano district, narrated how many artisanal miners in Uganda do not have safety wear and do not pay direct taxes on the minerals. They smuggle the minerals across the region for better prices because the minerals are not certified. Businye, who is also the LC3 councillor in Rwamiri parish, criticised the low prices paid by big companies to

Eng. Ivan Kawuma Maale, an artisanal miner in Sslingo ASM Association, Mubende, learnt that in Rwanda, there was political will to formalise the artisanal miners. Maale added that because of lack of formalisation of the artisanal miners in Uganda, they work under fear of being evicted from their mines.

"We don't need foreign investors to come into the mining sector. We have learnt to make mining a business. In Rwanda, government gave miners a voice and organised them. Mining can widen the

Don Binyina, the executive director African Centre for Energy and Mineral Policy, noted that the artisanal and small scale miners in Uganda employ dangerous mining techniques that regularly cause accidents and deaths, especially from mine collapses.

"Rwanda has the best example of good governance of the artisanal and small scale mining in East Africa. The government

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