

(left), has called for implementation of the equal opportunity policy at all levels in the country. He was speaking at the launch of the 4th annual report on state of equal opportunity in Uganda in Kampala yesterday. [Shahibah Nakirya]



KEEPING CITY CLEAN
Improving sanitation
Road contractors scrub a section of Bombo Road in Bwaise to remove dust, which is one of the challenges affecting Kampala City roads. The development is part of Kampala Capital City Authority's ambitious campaign to beautify and modernise the city.
PHOTO BY MICHAEL KALUMBIZI

Wakiso District loses Shs12b in illegal sand mining annually

Warning. Environmentalists recently raised concern over increasing sand mining in major swamps across the country, warning that the vice will spark off a serious ecological disaster.

BY JOSEPH KIGGUNDU
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WAKISO: Wakiso District is losing Shs12b annually in unauthorised illegal sand mining, *Daily Monitor* has established.

Wakiso, one of Uganda's fastest growing districts, is one of the areas where excessive sand mining is taking place due to the booming construction industry.

According to Mr David Kabale, the Wakiso District officer-in-charge of revenue, the Shs12b could be used in upgrading the road network in the district.

Currently, the district's annual

road fund ranges from Shs400m to Shs800m.

Available data from the district's engineering department indicates that 90 per cent of the roads require regular maintenance and rehabilitation.

"Most of the sub-counties and town councils in the district depend on sand mining and stone quarry business as a source of income, but since they lack capacity to monitor all the mining sites, there are illegal activities going on thus leading to loss of revenue," Mr Kabale said in an interview recently.

Mr Kabaale says the district is currently working out modalities to ensure that sand mining is done only in gazetted areas.

Outlining some of the solutions to prevent illegal sand mining, Mr Kabale said the district leaders should come up with gazetted places and also implore those in the mining business to pay taxes directly to the

AFFECTED AREAS

Currently, sanding mining is carried out in the areas such as Masulita Sub-county, Masulita Town Council, Mende Sub-county, Kakiri Sub-county, Kasanje and Kajjansi Town Council in Wakiso District. Many of the individuals and companies engaged in the business are not authorised.

district.

"We are going to work closely with National Environmental Management Authority (Nema) and the district natural resources department to map out those places where legal sand mining can be carried out to benefit the district," he said.

"We shall involve the police to arrest those who will continue operating in illegal sand mining sites because they are denying us (district) revenue," he said.

Currently, sanding mining is carried out in the areas such as Masulita Sub-county, Masulita Town Council, Mende Sub-county, Kakiri Sub-county, Kasanje and Kajjansi Town Council. Many of the individuals and companies engaged in the business are not authorised by Nema and the district.

Recently, Nema rejected a pro-

briefly

Leaders clash over suspect

MUKONO. Mukono District top leaders have clashed over the release of a businessman implicated in illegal sand mining in Wasinga Village, Mpunge Sub-county in Mukono District. Although the district speaker, Mr Emmanuel Mbonye, welcomed the arrest of the suspect as a good move, the district chairperson, Mr Andrew Ssenyonga, said this was unnecessary since he had already apologised in a letter he sent to the chief administrative officer. The suspect is also accused of diverting Nsanja-Mpunge road and commencing sand mining activities in the area without approval from the district and National Environmental Management Authority. [Jessica Sabano]

Women urged on savings

MPIGI. Mawokota South MP John Bosco Lubyayi has urged women at Bunjakko Island to develop a saving culture as a way of fighting poverty. While handing over Shs5m to 50 members of Agali Awamu Women Group at Kasawo Village in Buwama Sub-county recently, Mr Lubyayi said many women want to get everything from their husbands yet some of them have financial challenges. "Stop relying on your husbands. Work, save and invest in income generating activities," he advised. [Sadat Mbogo]

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Wakiso loses Shs12b in illegal sand mining

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Voices

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DAVID KABALE,
WAKISO DISTRICT
REVENUE OFFICER



"Some people think that we are fighting investors, but what kind of investors are those bent on destroying our environment? They (investors) are not authorised by Nema, not even the district. We need to investigate those people who are behind these illegal sand mining activities so that they pay for their wrong,"
MATIA LWANGA
BWANIKA,
WAKISO DISTRICT
CHAIRPERSON

"The only areas which can be approved for sand mining are wetlands, central forest reserves, private forests, and lake shores. Scooping sand directly from the lake has not yet been authorised because the guidelines are still being drafted,"
ESAU MPOZA,
WAKISO DISTRICT
ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

posal by a Chinese company to excavate sand on the shores of Lake Victoria at Kawuku in Nkumba Parish, Wakiso District.

Illegal sand mining

The company, Mango Tree Group Ltd, has since last year been on the spot for allegedly engaging in illegal sand mining activities in the area.

The company directors had sought official clearance from Nema, to conduct commercial sand mining at three sites on the lake shores at Nkumba, next to Kimi Island in Mukono District and near Kavejanja-Buusi Island, Wakiso District.

But Nema insisted that the company's activities have a negative impact on the eco-system on the lake shores, which would consequently affect the communities around the Entebbe peninsula.

Mr Matia Lwanga Bwanika, the Wakiso District chairperson, who has been on the forefront of fighting illegal sand mining, said the operations to crackdown on illegal sand miners will go on despite resistance from some government circles.

"Some people think that we are fighting investors, but what kind of investors are those bent on destroying our environment? They (investors) are not authorised by Nema, not even the district," Mr Bwanika said.

"We need to investigate those people who are behind these illegal sand mining activities so that they pay for their wrongdoings because what they are doing has also affected the fish business in Uganda," he said.

Wakiso District environment officer, Mr Esau Mpoza, said many individuals engaging in sand mining avoid laid-down procedures for sand mining and apply for Nema certificate when they are already operating illegally.

KEY ISSUE

Sand mining has of recent become a lucrative business, especially in peri-urban areas due to the swiftly growing construction sector where it is used to make concrete.

"That's why we usually stop them before they completely destroy the environment in the area," said Mr Mpoza.

However, Mr Mpoza revealed that the only areas which can be approved for sand mining are wetlands, central forest reserves, private forests, and lake shores.

"Scooping sand directly from the lake has not yet been authorised because the guidelines are still being drafted," he said.

Sand mining has of recent become a lucrative business, especially in peri-urban areas due to the swiftly growing construction sector where it is used to make concrete.

Recently, environmentalists raised concern over the increasing sand mining in major swamps across the country, warning that excessive excavation of sand in wetlands will spark off a serious ecological disaster.