

Floods irk gold miners

NAMAYINGO

By George Bita

The current heavy rains have led to flooding of the goldmines dotting Namayingo district's countryside.

According to Robert Otabon, a miner, the floods have made further excavation difficult.

"Most times, what miners do is to abandon such places and start digging elsewhere. It is easy to detect another potential mining spot, by simply looking out for soil samples with a shiny brown colour," Otabon told *New Vision* on Wednesday.

He argued that less effort would be required in setting up another mine, compared to pumping out water of the pits.

Alex Otengi, a resident, said the rains have only worsened an already bad situation, given the high water table in Buse and Nsango parishes.

"The heavy rains only worsen the flooding as our proximity to Lake Victoria inevitably raises the water table. Most often, the miners have barely gone a few feet beneath the soil surface when they strike the underground water," Otengi narrated.

He said many of the miners employ rudimentary tools, such as buckets, to get the water out, making the task hectic.

Adam Mulinde, the LC1 chairperson of Buse village, said the current situation has resulted in numerous open pits being abandoned.

"They can leave the pit dry when they break off at 6:00pm, only to find it flooded the next morning. Such pits pose a danger to people and animals as they may drown in them," Mulinde said.

He claimed that in the last



Gold miners in Buse village, Namayingo. The heavy rains have led to flooding of the mines.
Photo by George Bita

two years, over 50 flooded pits have been deserted, in preference for new mining territories.

Mutabona Onyango, a site manager at Nsango village mine, advised the miners to set up associations through

which they could benefit more from the business.

"Once we work as a team, we will do a lot together. It would be easy to acquire items, such as communal water pumps, and mineral weighing scales," Onyango assured.

WHAT RESIDENTS SAY



Alex Sifuna, miner
The problem with the area we operate in is that it is a low-lying ground. There is no way water can drain away easily, which leads to the unrelenting floods.



Kamuyat Namususwa, resident of Buse village
The Government should give the miners better tools, including water pumps, to ensure a better product and more revenue.



Martin Wangira, casual labourer
Scooping water out of a mine is a dangerous process. One day, a boy fell in and would have drowned, had it not been for the timely intervention of his workmates.