

the Cottage Industries Co-operative Society, for training on how to produce standard products. So far,

the Wednesday training at the Management Training and Advisory Centre (MTAC) in Nakawa, Kampala sought to encourage the co-operative

members to certify their products and follow the set standards.

"We have been losing money because of the low quality of products and poor branding,"

to set up an incubation equip members with skills production.

"We do not want hand ministry, but we want to

Africa needs to improve regulation of sand mining

In Africa, we have many minerals, but we have failed to appreciate their role in economic development, thus taking them for granted. The focus of this article is on sand mining in Africa and its voracious demand globally.

Sand mining basically involves the extraction of sand through an open pit, though it can also be mined from beaches, inland dunes and also dredged from rivers and oceans. Booming urbanisation has increased the demand for sand and this is due to the fact that sand is a major ingredient of concrete, plaster and asphalt paving, which are used in the construction industry. Moreover, industrial sand and gravel is also used to make glass.

It is estimated that more than half of the world population now live in cities. Reports indicate that cities are now expanding at a very high rate as the number of people living in urban areas has more than quadrupled since 1950 to about four billion now. The expansion of cities definitely implies that more buildings, such as office towers, apartment blocks and shopping malls will be constructed, thus increasing the demand for more sand, which is a main ingredient of concrete.

Taking the example of China, reports indicate that the country has used more concrete in the past few years than the US used in the entire 20th century. Moreover, other countries such as the United Arab Emirates are now involved in the importation of sand. This, therefore, points to the crucial role of sand in economic development.

The question then arises, as to whether African governments are doing all they can to preserve sand in their countries? Several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa such as South Africa have regulated and legislated sand mining activities. Uganda, on the other hand, has also taken the issue of sand mining seriously. For instance, a committee on natural resources on sand mining in Uganda was established to investigate mining in Lwera wetland, Lake Victoria and its shores in



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Wakiso district. In its report dated November 16, 2016, the committee made interesting findings and recommendations regarding sand mining activities in Uganda.

Despite the regulation and investigations, the issue of sand mining still needs more concentration in African countries. Initially, sand was mined on a small-scale by the local people, who basically use hand tools such as spades. However, the increasing global demand for sand has led to the influx of foreign companies in Africa, who are now involved in industrial sand mining. These employ advanced machinery and technology such as excavators and boats.

The issue of concern is the abandoned sand mining sites left behind by these foreign

companies after exhausting the sand in an area. It is an agreed international principle that mining companies have to plan for the closure of the mines after the resources have been exhausted so that the land can be reused by the local people.

However, many foreign companies involved in the extraction of sand have often abandoned the pits without any plans of closure.

I visited Lwera wetland and I was saddened by the various pits abandoned by the Chinese companies involved in sand mining. The pits pose a threat not only to the environment, but also to the local people.

Besides the abandoned sand pits, the activity of extracting sand is also associated with various negative impacts such as direct soil erosion, disturbance of local wildlife, accidents, among others. Moreover, it can also lead to permanent loss of sand in the country as well as major habitat destruction.

Key issues for policy makers

Given the crucial role of sand in the global economic development, there is need for policy makers to closely supervise and monitor the extraction of sand in Africa, especially where foreign companies are involved.

This should include the demand for closure plans and financial guarantees from foreign companies so that we are assured that mining sites will be covered after the sand has been exhausted.

Since many African countries are still developing, the future generation will require enormous amount of sand for urbanisation. As such, if sand is not reserved, then many African countries will also start importing it very expensively from other countries.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to closely supervise the extraction of sand by foreign companies and other local people who extract it illegally.

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