

Protect sand reserves, govt told

By Edward Kaylwa

The government has been asked to establish the reserves of sand, clay and other development minerals and gauge how long they will last, amidst fears they are threatened by demand pressure.

During the release of a baseline survey and value chain analysis of the minerals in 22 Ugandan districts, experts said the fast growing population was putting pressure on the development minerals.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also asked the government to establish model mines and value chains in the Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) sector, to ensure their exploitation contributes to national development.

The UNDP country representative, Thomas Ole-Kuyan, said development minerals such as sand, marble, kaolin, stone aggregate, clay, limestone and dimension stones can play a critical role in Uganda's social economic development, but are largely ignored.

He said well planned and executed pilot projects can help the government to exploit the sector's full potential in contributing to poverty reduction, reduce the trade deficit and meeting the current rapid urbanisation challenge.

"The latent potential of the development minerals is big. Urbanisation rates are soaring, with a predicted urban population of 20 million by 2040, which is more than a three-fold increase from 2013. With the ongoing industrialisation and infrastructure development efforts, exploiting development minerals in the ASM can be a critical game changer for the government if given attention," Ole-Kuyan said. The survey report was released at the Kampala Serena Hotel on Tuesday.

Development minerals are materials mined, processed, manufactured and used domestically in construction, manufacturing, infrastructure and agriculture.

They are economically important because they are mined close to the local communities, and thus have strong domestic economic linkages.

Uganda has a diversity of development minerals, including limestone, clay, gypsum, marble and sand, among others. It is also home to various industrial minerals and semi-precious stones.

Ole-Kuyan said the model mines and value chains will help to improve human capital development in the artisanal mining sector and create new industries and jobs



A man piles sand ready for sale on the banks of River Manafwa in Busulu sub-county, Manafwa district

for the country's youthful population.

He said despite their contribution to employment, income generation and poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods, the development minerals sector workforce, many of who are the artisanal and small-scale miners, remain invisible.

"This situation is worsened by lack of accurate data to inform policy and programmatic actions to facilitate economic transformation and human development," he said.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, development minerals contribute 390,000 jobs, 7% of GDP and gross of \$350m (about sh912.5b) in value.

The baseline survey and value chain analysis was carried out by Levin Sources, a minerals consultancy firm contracted by the United Nations - Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Development Minerals Programme.

Levin Sources consultant Jennifer Hinton said establishing of a dedicated ASM unit at the Directorate of Geological Survey and Mines would help the government to regulate the sector, and continuously guide the miners in using appropriate technology and value addition.

She also suggested the involvement of stakeholders of development minerals in the current policy and legal reform process.

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The minerals policy is currently awaiting the approval of cabinet.

She said unregulated extraction, limited access to capital for affordable technologies, limited human capital development and income disparity have led to under-optimisation of development minerals.

The report highlighted the best way to address the regulatory framework challenges, institutional operating context, and baseline sector profile of the environmental, occupational and social impacts within the sector.

It also aimed to demonstrate the development minerals sector's contribution to inclusive development, sustainable wealth creation and fulfillment of Uganda's

development goals.

The reports also provided more comprehensive data on the range of these natural resources, their sites of extraction and the number of people who benefit from them, especially in terms of employment.

Cedric Merel, the head of co-operation at the European Union Delegation to Uganda, said the information provided by the study would go a long way in optimising the minerals sector in the country, if adhered to.

"This will promote human development as most of the development minerals mining is done by artisanal and small scale miners, although reaping the full contribution of the sector for the country's development will require some policy and legal reform," he said.

The director of geology at the Directorate of Geological Survey and Mines, Zachary Baguma, said development minerals make up 90% of materials used for construction of roads and other infrastructure.

"If fully exploited, the sector would greatly reduce the cost of infrastructure development in Uganda," Baguma said.

Baguma also said exploiting the full potential of the development minerals would increase the statistical contribution of the minerals sector to GDP, from 0.3% to between three and five percent.

Mining

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Centres for Water for Production and farmers or communities within the five catchments of Ngenge that serves Ngenge Irrigation scheme, Manafwa catchment serving Doho scheme, Mubuku catchment serving Mubuku scheme, Tochil catchment serving Tochil scheme and Wadiali

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Based Enterprises and/or IGAs in/