



Artisanal miners collect marble stones in Loboneit in Rupa Subcounty, Moroto District recently. People who are closer to such natural resources should be able to benefit more, but the reverse is true that such people realise a few benefits, if not any. PHOTO/PAUL MURUNGI

# ANARDE advancing human rights awareness, access to justice in Karamoja

Amidst the industrial exploitation of minerals, legal frameworks which protect the rights of local populations affected by extractive industries have been partially implemented leading to multiple violations and abuses of the rights of land owners and users as well as workers employed in these industries.

BY PAUL MURUNGI

**K**aramoja sub region is endowed with a lot of minerals resources including marble, gold, limestone chromium, graphite, copper, coloured stones of different kinds, and prospects of oil.

Among these, only gold, limestone and marble are fully understood and have been explored and exploited quite extensively.

Mining activities in the region have brought about a tremendous economic transformation of the Karamoja communities from nomadic cattle keeping into min-

ing livelihood.

Most of the Karamoja communities are largely into artisanal and small mining which remains an important source of livelihood activity to thousands of miners in the area.

The sector remains largely informal characterised by smuggling, high health and safety risks, conflict among mineral operators leading to loss of revenue to both local and central government.

Artisanal and small scale mining industry is directly employing 390,000 people across the country with 2.7 million people benefiting directly. 83 per cent of minerals produced in the country is through artisanal mining, according to statistics from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development.

Apart from artisanal and small scale miners. The subregion mineral potential has also attracted a number of mining companies. However, the extractive industry in resource-rich regions where institutions and law enforcement are weak can be both a curse and a panacea for local communities.

Amidst the industrial exploitation of minerals, legal frameworks which protect the rights of local populations affected by extractive industries have been partially implemented leading to multiple vi-

olations and abuses of the rights of land owners and users as well as workers employed in these industries.

It's against such a background that Advocates for Natural Resources and Development (ANARDE), in partnership with Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) and the European Union is implementing two projects with the first being a business and human rights project with support from the Belgian Development Coop-

eration (DGD) entitled 'Promoting sustainable development goals by strengthening access to justice mechanism in Uganda (2017-2021)'.

The project implementation is on course in the seven districts of Karamoja sub region (Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Amudat, Napak, Kotido, Kaabong and Abim) and Buliisa District in the Albertine Graben of Uganda.

The second project with the EU is aimed at promoting commu-

nities and civil society to demand for good governance on natural resources from 2020-2021.

Mr Frank Tumusiime, the coordinator of the project says world over, everyone is dependent on natural resources which are largely exploited from rural communities. In effect, people who are closer to such natural resources should be able to benefit more, but the reverse is true that such people realise a few benefits, if not any. And yet such people are affected by mining effects such as environmental degradation, and destruction of infrastructure.

To put it in perspective, the large tracts of land lying bare in Rupa Sub County in Moroto District in Karamoja sub region has been a result of mining by both small scale and large scale mining companies.

"Rupa, which lies at the foot of Moroto Mountain, is endowed with minerals largely in gold, marble and limestone. However, simmering tensions between artisanal miners within the community and large scale mining companies are rising," Mr Tumusiime says.

Sun Belt, a Chinese mining company established within Rupa Sub County since 2017 to mine marble stones is being accused of extending beyond its boundaries which has led to conflict between artisanal miners and the company, being accused of trespass.

ANARDE is closely monitoring the situation on the ground through its paralegals who are on ground.

A recent report from ANARDE by Ms Isabella Orishaba, the project advocate, indicates that Loboneit marble mining site where Sun Belt Mining Company Ltd operates, Rata limestone mining site where the former DAO marble operated and currently occupied by Multi-task Mining Company Limited and others have a variety of human rights issues caused by the existence of the mining companies in different locations which range from social, cultural and economic related abuses.

However, the Sunbelt Mining Company representative insists the company



"ANARDE has set out three programmes to combat such challenges faced by mining communities namely legal aid, nature conservations and extractives justice programme. The programmes cover key areas in advocacy, litigation, research and sensitisation. The first which is the legal aid programme is purposely to train lawyers who are key players in advancing justice in communities, training of judicial officers who adjudicators in most cases when conflicts arise among communities and companies and governments,"

**Mr Frank Tumusiime, the coordinator Advocates for Natural Resources and Development.**