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

Karamoja sub region is endowed with a lot of minerals resources including marble, gold, limestone chromite, graphite, copper, coloured stones of different kinds, and prospects of oil. Among these, only gold, limestone and marble are fully exploited. However, simmering tensions between artisanal miners and the companies involved have brought about a tremendous economic transformation of the Karamoja communities from nomadic cattle keeping into mineral livelihood.

Most of the Karamoja communities are largely into artisanal and small scale 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 miner 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.

Within 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.

ANARDE has set out three programmes to combat such challenges faced by mining communities namely legal aid, nature conservation 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.

ANARDE has been involved in implementing two projects with the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD) entitled Promoting sustainable development goals through strengthening access to justice mechanisms in Uganda (2017-2021).

Rupa, which lies at the foot of Mount Karamoja, is endowed with minerals largely in gold, marble and limestone. However, simmering tensions between artisanal miners and the companies involved have brought about a tremendous economic transformation of the Karamoja communities from nomadic cattle keeping into mineral livelihood.

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