

# Ensure minerals benefit Tanzanians, govt told

By Correspondent Daniel Sembereya, Dodoma

THE government has been urged to ensure that its citizens benefit from the natural resources it has been endowed with.

Speaking in Dodoma yesterday during the launch of a study on the Taxation and the State of Africa Mining Vision Implementation (AMV): A case study of Tanzania and East Africa, the deputy chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy and Minerals, Deo Ngalawa (Ludewa-CCM), called for the government to establish authentic statistics on Tanzanite and other minerals that the country has.

Ngalawa said it did not make sense to find that India was the sole seller of Tanzanite to the international market, while Tanzania where the mineral is extracted was not recognised.

He said that according to 2002 findings, the Tanzanite that was sold in the international market could foot two national fiscal budgets.

"Even those of us who are here don't know this...and even if we went for statistics, we can't see them," he said,

adding: "We need to investigate so that at the end of the day we ensure that tanzanite benefits and reflects on the lives of people living around the mine, as well as on the national income."

Concurring with the deputy chairperson, the committee's chairperson Dotto Biteko (Bukombe) also wondered where the money collected from the mining companies was going.

"You will be surprised to see Geita Region has a big mining company, but it is where we find people living in abject poverty," he said, adding: "In the last financial year, Geita Region ranked third among the very poor regions in the country."

Although there are indicators that are used to measure the poverty level in the country, it was expected that Geita Region could be better off. "Your question is very valid-where is the money?"

However, Biteko urged civil society organisations, the government and Parliament to join hands so as to attain a collective solution on how to ensure

the extractive industry was beneficial to the citizenry and the nation as a whole.

Ally Kessy (Nkasi) said that if the civil servants were trustful and keen, it was very difficult for multinational mining companies to dodge from paying taxes.

On small scale miners, Kessy said that the government should also find a mechanism that would track and also make them pay taxes.

For his part, Vedastus Mathayo (Musoma Urban-CCM) urged the government to find ways on how to support and give first priority to local investors because they paid taxes.

"I always wonder why these multinational mining companies regularly claim that they don't make any profit."

The Secretary of Tanzania Trade and Economic Justice Forum, William Madiwa, said: "The loopholes in our laws create room for some mining companies to make profit transfer from one country to another. They do this either through subsidiary companies or tax haven countries."

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