

CEPA spearheads oversight role on mining sector



Chadza: Executive Director - CEPA



Mushani: Desk officer EITI Secretariat



Hilton Banda: Geologist



Chikomeni Manda: Artisanal Miner



Chatupa: Consulting Geologist



Cynthia Simkonda: CEPA's Programme Officer - Extractives

By Chiku Jere

A local civil society organisation, Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA), has called upon stakeholders in the minerals sector to ensure effective management and good governance of the sector for it to enormously contribute to poverty alleviation and growth of the national economy.

CEPA's Executive Director, William Chadza, made the call when he opened a two-day mining sector stakeholders' knowledge exchange and capacity building workshop at Silver Sands Holiday Resort in Salima.

Chadza said recent studies have revealed weak coordination among players in the mining sector including government, the private sector, civil society, media, traditional leaders and communities in the management and monitor-

ing of the sector in accordance with the existing policy and legal framework.

"In spite of the existence of regulatory framework - the Mines and Mineral Act of 1981, and the Mines and Minerals Policy of 2013 - implementation and enforcement have been weak, creating a situation that has been exploited, resulting in a situation whereby a few have benefited and continue to do so, from the country's natural resources," he said.

Chadza said it is, therefore, imperative that all stakeholders work together in the sustainable management of the sector in accordance with the existing legal framework to ensure that the country's mineral resources benefit the nation as whole and not a few individuals.

The workshop which drew together representatives from civil society organisations, mining companies, local councils, mining area communities; the media, among other

participants, looked at ways how oversight capacity of stakeholders in the mining sector can be enhanced, corroborated as well as consolidated.

Chadza observed that mining is evolving into both a social and economic issue hence stakeholders need to brainstorm different perspectives in order to come up with tangible solutions that will promote effective management and governance.

Through several presentations, workshop participants shared ideas on increasing interaction of policy and decision makers on mining as well as enhancing stakeholders' understanding of mining issues.



Participants at the knowledge exchange workshop

Among the presentations that were delivered and formed part of interactive discussion was one titled 'Building a Participatory Resource Rich Country' which was presented by a Department of Mines official, Cassius Chiwambo, who advocated for participation of all stakeholders in managing the minerals sector.

"All parties must have that common and shared responsibility. It is everyone's sector and everyone has to gain out of it," said Chiwambo.

He followed up with another presentation dubbed 'Mining Policy and Legal Framework; putting laws into practice', zeroing much on how laws can be utilized to promote sustainable development of the mining sector.

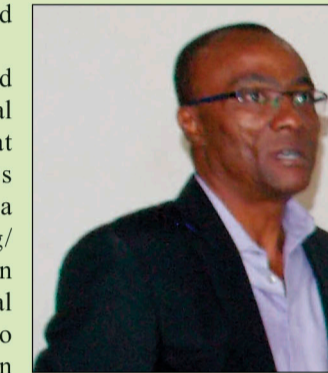
"Having a good law and realising correct benefits from the operations are different. Malawi needs to make its mining laws work for the benefit of all players," he said.

The other interesting presentation was on how mining can contribute to local community development and it came from Veteran Geologist James Chatupa of Craton Resources.

urgently established," said Chatupa.

He also recommended the creation of Geological Survey/Mines offices at District Council offices and propagation of a culture of publishing/printing information brochures for the local communities in order to facilitate information exchange between local communities and the other stakeholders in the sector.

There was also a presentation on Gemstone Mining in Malawi which was passionately delivered by a Zimbabwe-based Artisanal and Small-scale Miner (ASM), Chikomeni Manda.



White: Top govt. officials have a lot of influence over mining related decisions



Participants banging heads during the workshop

This particular discussion drew focus on the role of community, parliamentarians, mining companies, government, media, traditional authorities and civil society in ensuring that communities benefit from the mining activities happening in their areas.

"Monitoring of mining company activities and promotion of consultations with local communities must be

for the sector, currently using primitive equipment, to graduate to mechanized mining.

"If miners can be trained in modern ways of mining such as using mini-excavators, production and revenue generation would dramatically increase which would substantially contribute to poverty alleviation," he said.

Another presenter, Robert White, enlightened the

participants on 'Political Economy of Mining in Malawi', based on a political economy analysis that was conducted by Tilitonse Fund.

White said the study uncovered that government decisions on mining issues in Malawi are based on several factors including desperation for economic diversification as well as personal gains or corruption.

"High level government officials (including Ministers or the President) have a lot of influence over mining related decisions. Therefore, although technocrats may make recommendations, final decisions that are made at higher levels have sometimes ended up being different and unfavourable to public interest," said White.

Other equally important presentations were on 'Malawi's Oil Exploration Potential and Development, its Trends and Best Practice' presented by geologist Hilton Eneya Banda, and 'Transparency in the Mining Sector' by CEPA's Programme Officer - Extractives, Cynthia Simkonda.

"Transparency is a tool to promote accountability but transparency is impaired if CSOs, media, parliament and interested stakeholders do not fulfill their roles which include exposing politicization of mining, oil and gas funds," said Simkonda.

Leonard Mushani, Malawi Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) Secretariat's desk officer at the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and



Chiwambo: Called for shared responsibility

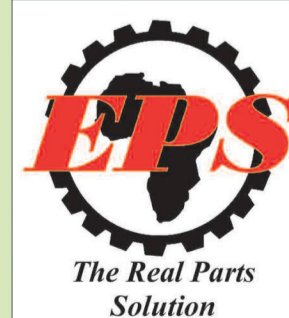
Development's Revenue Policy Division also made a presentation taking the participants through the 'Journey towards improving natural resources transparency and management.'

In his presentation, Mushani outlined the progress that Malawi has made on EITI noting that the country is now an EITI candidate implying that Malawi is just close to becoming a compliant country.

The workshop came up with ten issues that need following up including; the need to disseminate information on minerals and mining related development to communities, strengthening government and community engagement, and strengthening CSO coordination and expediting policy development processes, among others.

There was a resounding consensus among participants for the speedy passing of the Mines and Minerals Bill (MMB) with common belief that the revised draft law is the only tool that will collectively address a myriad of concerns dogging the sector.

With support from Tilitonse Fund, CEPA is implementing a project called "Strengthening Mining Governance in Malawi" whose three main outputs are; strengthened policy and institutional framework for regulating the mining sector, increased cohesion of CSOs in policy advocacy on mining and increased public understanding of mining issues ■



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