

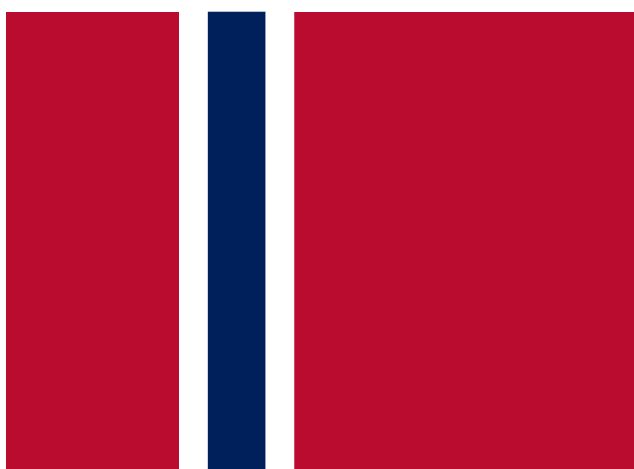
OVERVIEW OF UGANDA'S CRITICAL MINERALS INDUSTRY AND POSITIONING THE COUNTRY IN THE CRITICAL GLOBAL MINERALS AGENDA



FACTSHEET
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DISCLAIMER

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Authors

Onesmus Mugenyi
Phoebe Atukunda
Paul Twebaze

Editors

Phillip Nyakundi

Design

Dennis Kabia - Communications Associate East & Southern Africa, GFI

Images

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Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AMV	Africa Mining Vision
ASM	Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining
ATMS	Agro-industrialisation, Tourism, Mineral-based Industrial Development (including oil and gas), and Science, Technology, and Innovation.
DGSM	Directorate of Geological Surveys and Mines
EAC	East African Community
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EITI	Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
MEDM	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development
NRGI	Natural Resource Governance Institute
RINR	Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources
SMMRP	Sustainable Management of Mineral Resources Project

FACTSHEET #1

An overview of Uganda's critical Minerals Industry

1. Introduction

Uganda is emerging as a globally significant frontier for critical minerals. The geological environment across Uganda is considered favourable for hosting world-class economic mineral deposits¹ with substantial deposits needed for the global energy transition. If managed well, these minerals can facilitate a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, advanced electronics, and industrial manufacturing.² The government of Uganda recognises the potential contribution of the mineral sector and has thus aligned its mineral development programme with the government's national development goals,³ particularly the "ten-fold growth strategy" to expand the economy from USD 50 billion (2025) to USD 500 billion by 2040.⁴ This strategy prioritizes mineral-based development as a key pillar, especially high-value critical minerals as a primary engine for achieving its long-term economic transformation.⁵ In line with its industrialisation goals, Uganda aims to become a regional destination for mineral processing and value addition.⁶ This ambition is reflected in recent private investments in gold⁷ and tin⁸ refining infrastructure. By promoting domestic beneficiation, the government seeks to retain more of the mineral value chain in the country.⁹ Uganda has also achieved high strides in legal reforms to align its mineral sector with a number of mineral development frameworks such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), Africa Mining Vision (AMV), and the ICGLR's Regional Initiative against the illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR), among others. The key provisions of these

- 1 MEMD. (2018). Mining and Mineral Policy for Uganda, accessed August 5, 2025, <https://www.ugeiti.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Minerals-and-Mining-Policy-2018.pdf>
- 2 See, DGSM. (September 2024). Critical Minerals Occurrences Map of Uganda. Available at <https://dgsm.go.ug/resources/>
- 3 See, NPA. (2025). Fourth National Development Plan FY2025/26 – FY2029/30. Available at <https://parliamentwatch.ug/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/PDF-FINAL-NDPIV-for-Parliament-Approval-13122024-1.pdf>
- 4 See, The Wealth Creation Cycle. MoFPED Times Issue 18 January – March 2025, accessed August 11, 2025, https://finance.go.ug/sites/default/files/2025-04/MOFPED%20TIMES%20ISSUE%2018%20-_0.pdf
- 5 How Strategic Investment, Value Addition Can Revive Uganda's Mining Sector, accessed August 5, 2025, <https://businesstimesug.com/how-strategic-investment-value-addition-can-revive-ugandas-mining-sector/>
- 6 MEMD. (2020). Draft Program Budget Framework Paper for Financial Year 2021/22. Kampala: Mineral Development Programme under MEMD.
- 7 UIA. (2025, August 18). President Museveni commissions Uganda's biggest gold project. Retrieved from Uganda Investment Authority (UIA): <https://ugandainvest.go.ug/president-museveni-commissions-ugandas-biggest-gold-project/>
- 8 MEMD. (2024, April 12). Woodcross Resources Company Launches a Tin Smelting Plant at Ruti, Mbarara District. Retrieved from Mineral Development Programme -MEMD Uganda. <https://dgsm.go.ug/woodcross-resources-company-launches-a-tin-smelting-plant-at-ruti-mbarara-district/>
- 9 <https://resourcegovernance.org/events/unlocking-mineral-value-addition-support-ugandas-ten-fold-growth-strategy>

frameworks have since been incorporated in the Mining and Minerals Act, Cap. 159.¹⁰ The focus on value-added processing of critical minerals offers a pathway to industrialization, job creation, and increased foreign exchange earnings.¹¹

The focus on critical minerals is not only a national priority but also part of a wider global conversation. In April 2024, the United Nations Secretary-General launched a Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, bringing together governments, industries, and civil society to develop global principles that safeguard environmental and social standards across the mineral value chain. Uganda's ongoing reforms and ambitions place it in a strong position to align with these global frameworks while advancing its own economic transformation.¹² This factsheet therefore presents key information about critical minerals in Uganda's mineral sector.

2. What are Critical Minerals?

According to Reddy Dhana Raju (2020), critical minerals are defined as metals and non-metals that are considered vital for the economic well-being of the world's major and emerging e-economies.¹³ The raw materials, minerals and metals that are necessary for renewable energy, clean technology, and our transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon future are often referred to as critical minerals.¹⁴ The Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development defines Critical minerals as metallic and non-metallic elements that are essential for modern technologies, including green energy, consumer electronics, electric vehicles, aerospace and defense, whose global supply chains are vulnerable to disruption.¹⁵ According to Africa's Green Mineral Strategy, the Criteria for defining the scope for critical minerals /include (i) Minerals that are used in clean energy technologies and green industries. (ii) Minerals that feed stocks into mining supply chains and equitable industrialisation.¹⁶ The specific demand drivers for critical minerals can be classified into six pathways as illustrated below.¹⁷

10 See, Mining and Minerals Act, Cap. 159. Available at <https://bills.parliament.ug/attachments/Mining%20and%20Minerals%20Act,%202022.pdf>

11 Critical minerals: value addition to escape commodity dependence, accessed August 13, 2025, <https://worldinvestmentforum.unctad.org/session/critical-minerals-value-addition-escape-commodity-dependence>

12 NRGi. (2024, September 24). UN Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals: Toward the Change We Need. Retrieved from Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI): <https://resourcegovernance.org/events/un-panel-critical-energy-transition-minerals-toward-change-we-need>

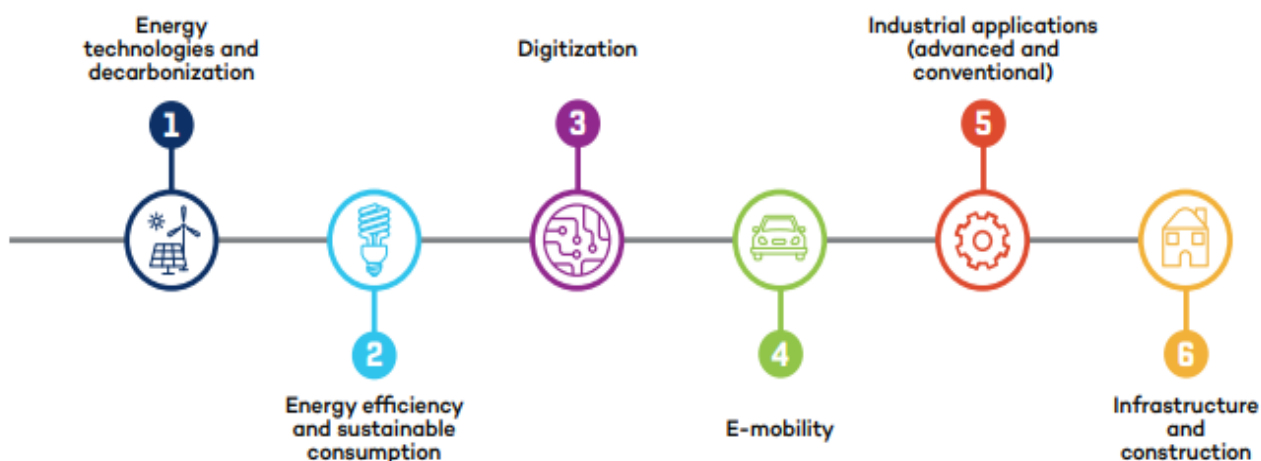
13 Raju, Reddy. (2020). Critical Minerals: Their Nature, Occurrence, Recovery and Uses. *Current science*. 119. 919-925. 10.18520/cs/v119/i6/919-925.

14 Critical Minerals: A Primer – Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development. Available at <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2023-09/critical-minerals-primer-en.pdf>

15 Ibid

16 https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44539-doc-AGMS_Final_doc.pdf

17 Critical Minerals: A Primer – Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development. Available at <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2023-09/critical-minerals-primer-en.pdf>



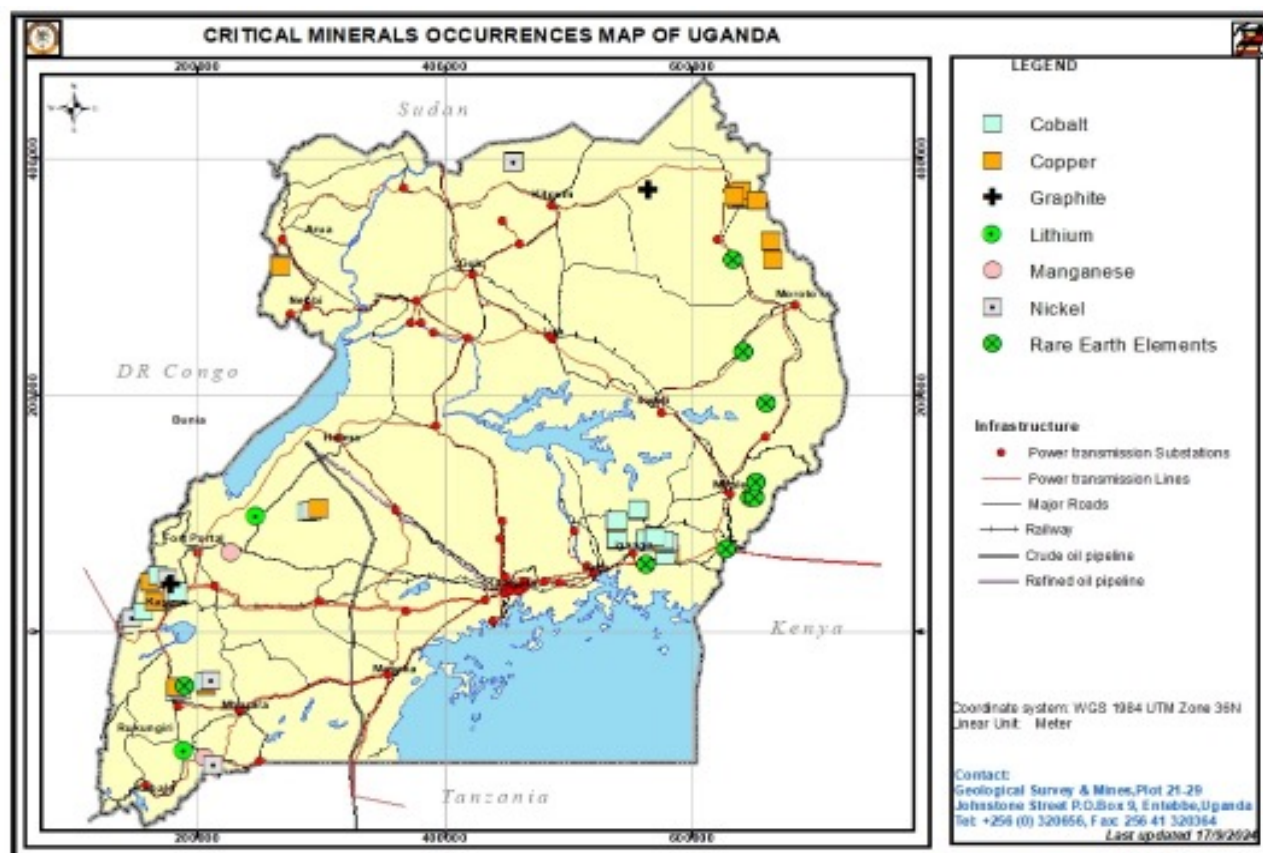
Source: Critical Minerals: A Primer – Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, 2023.

In the case of Uganda, critical minerals are referred to as strategic minerals. The Mining and Minerals Act, Cap. 159 defines “strategic minerals” as those “essential to the economic development and national security of Uganda, as may be prescribed by the Minister through a statutory instrument.”¹⁸ These include copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, manganese, and rare earth elements, which are key for clean energy technologies.¹⁹ Whereas the Act does not provide an exhaustive list of these strategic minerals, it defers their specific designation to future ministerial directives.²⁰

18 See, Section 8, Mining and Minerals Act, Cap. 159. Available at <https://bills.parliament.ug/attachments/Mining%20and%20Minerals%20Act,%202022.pdf>

19 See, DGSM. (September 2024). Critical Minerals Occurrences Map of Uganda. Available at <https://dgsm.go.ug/resources/>

20 Ibid, Section 8.

Figure 1: Map of Uganda showing critical mineral occurrences

3. What is the Current State of the Critical Minerals Sector in Uganda?

Uganda has diverse range of mineral resources that have the potential to contribute significantly to its economic growth.²¹ The country's mining sector has been prioritized under the National Development Plan IV (ATMS), with gold emerging as the leading export valued at approximately USD 3.8 billion in 2024, accounting for about 37% of the country's total export revenue.²² Gold alone has led to an increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) with recent flows of USD 300 million, mainly by Wagagai Gold Mine. Inaugurated as Uganda's first large-scale gold mine (Wagagai Project), is expected to produce about 1.5 tons/year @ 99.9% purity.²³ An analysis of historical and recent mineral production figures reveals varying trends across different mineral types.²⁴ Overall, the total mineral production by quantity decreased by 5.4% to 1,416,394 tonnes in 2022 from 1,496,584 tonnes in 2021.²⁵ However, the total value of minerals produced increased by 37.7% from UGX 105.4 billion in 2021 to UGX 145.1 billion in 2022. This indicates a shift towards higher-value minerals or

21 UNECA. (2023). United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Retrieved from Uganda ASM Profile: <https://knowledge.uneca.org/asm/uganda>

22 Uganda targets higher exports with first large-scale gold mine

23 Presentation by the Permanent Secretary - MEMD at the 14th Annual Mineral Wealth Conference held from 24th to 25th September 2025

24 Production figures and values may vary slightly between sources (DGSM reports, UBOS reports) and due to differences in reporting methodologies for various mineral types

25 UBOS. (2023). Statistical Abstract, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/2023-Statistical-Abstract.pdf>

improved pricing.²⁶ Uganda is positioning itself within the global movement to decarbonize, with critical minerals playing a central role in this transition. The government recognizes that minerals such as graphite, lithium, rare earth elements, and cobalt are essential inputs for clean energy technologies and the green economy.²⁷ In this regard, Uganda has made reforms in the mining sector to strengthen governance, attract responsible investment, and promote value addition.

In terms of the policy, legal, and institutional framework, the mining industry is governed by the Mining and Mineral Policy (2018)²⁸ and the Mining and Minerals Act, Cap. 159.²⁹ The Directorate of Geological Survey and Mines (DGSM) under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) is mandated to establish, promote, manage, and safeguard the sustainable exploitation and utilization of the country's mineral resources.³⁰

Recent reforms emphasize Value addition and export restrictions (e.g., bans on unprocessed gold and tin exports).³¹ ASM accounts for over 90% of mineral production and 60% of the mining workforce, mainly in gold and the 3Ts (tin, tungsten, tantalum). The new law seeks to regulate and formalize ASM for better safety, environmental standards, and revenues. Uganda has joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and aligned its laws with the ICGLR Protocol on Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources through the ICGLR Act, 2018 and the accompanying ICGLR Regulations, 2023.³² Uganda has also aligned its new law with the Africa Mining Vision adopted in 2009 by African heads of state.³³ The country aims to become a regional hub for mineral processing. This is demonstrated by new investments in gold and tin refining facilities, and efforts to revive historical assets like the Kilembe copper-cobalt mines³⁴ and advance the Makuutu Rare Earths Project.³⁵ The government is improving mineral production data systems, with plans for digitization to enhance monitoring. Uganda has also developed an energy transition plan.³⁶ While Uganda is not yet a major continental producer, its ambition to position itself within regional and global energy transition supply chains is gaining momentum. The table below presents the status of critical minerals in Uganda, based on the *2024 Mineral Potential of Uganda: Status of Exploration and Development report*.³⁷

26 Ibid.

27 Uganda Energy Transition Plan

28 MEMD. (2018). Mining and Mineral Policy for Uganda, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.ugeiti.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Minerals-and-Mining-Policy-2018.pdf>

29 Mining and Minerals Act, Cap. 159. Available at <https://bills.parliament.ug/attachments/Mining%20and%20Minerals%20Act,%202022.pdf>

30 Ibid., Sec. 19 and 194.

31 See Uganda Bans Raw Mineral Exports: What It Means for the Mining Sector

32 ACME. (2020, March 20). An overview of Uganda's new mining law. Retrieved from African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME).

33 The Status of Domestication of the Africa Mining Vision in Uganda: The Case of Artisanal and Small-scale Mining

34 See <https://dgsm.go.ug/redevelopment-of-kilembe-mines/>

35 See <https://www.nema.go.ug/en/makuutu-rare-earth-project-in-bugiri-mavuge-and-bugweri-districts/>

36 Uganda Energy Transition Plan

37 See 2024 Mineral Potential of Uganda: Status of Exploration and Development report

Table 1: Current State of Critical Minerals in Uganda

Mineral	Location	Status of Reserves	Nature Progress and of Action	Uses
Cobalt	Kilembe in Kasese District	5.5 Million Tones with a grade of 0.17% of cobalt	Kasese Cobalt Company Limited has been processing the cobalt stockpile, which is nearly exhausted.	In special alloys for the aerospace industry, electronics, and the high-tech industry
Copper	-Kilembe in Kasese District -Boboong in -Kotido District Kitaka in -Bushenyi District -Kampono in Mbarara District	-Reserve at closure was about 6.5 million tonnes at 1.77%Cu -Grade of 1.7% at Boboong, and Reserves at Kitaka and Kampono are under evaluation	-The government is looking for investors to develop the copper resources at Kilembe mines: -Reserves at Kitaka and Kamono are under exploration	Electrical conductors (wires), roofing and plumbing bullet shells
Graphite	Oromin Kitgum District	24.5 Mt measured in 1% of the license at 6-8%C: 3.3Bn tonnes(inferred): occur at Ormo, Kitgum M/S Consolidated African Resources has acquired the Mining Lease and is developing the mine.	Mining Lease granted to Consolidated Africa: Graphite can be used in the manufacture of batteries, steel, brake linings, foundry facings, lubricants, and blast furnace linings.	Battery electrodes, pencils, Brake pads and cleaning of nuclear reactors
Lithium	Ruhuma in Kabale District: Mwerasandu, Rwamwire and Nyabushenyi in Ntungamo District; Lunya in Mukono District; Nampeyo and Mbale Estate In Mubende District.	Requires exploration and evaluation	Pegmatite deposits	Amblygonite, Lepidolite and spodumen are the ores of lithium mainly used in chemicals and the production of long-lasting batteries.
Manganese	Isandara, Gulika, Kirongo and Gweitengya, all close to Isandara hill, and Kisinga in map sheets 57/3 and 57/1, Kyenjojo District	Require exploration evaluation	Detailed exploration required; pitting and trenching, sample analysis, geophysical surveys and drillings	Glass Manufacture, catalyst, rubber additive, black-brown pigment in paint, as a filler in dry cell batteries, alloy with aluminium
Nickel	(i) Kafunzo in Ntungamo District; Rugaga in Isingiro District.	Magnetic anomaly mapped by SMMRP at Kafunzo. A few kilometres north of this magnetic anomaly, there is another smaller magnetic zone with a length of 3 KM and a width of 200m.	Core drilling is recommended to study the source of the magnetic gravity anomaly, which might not be coming up to the rock surface, explaining the weak results by soil geochemistry.	Alloys such as stainless steel, nichrome and chromium (resists corrosion)
	(ii) Nickel in Kitgum and Lamwo Districts	Considering the analogies with the Kabanga nickel sulphide deposit in north-western Tanzania. It is speculated that an intrusion feeder channel could be the anomaly source.		
	(iii) Nickel in laterites at Logiri, Arua District	A magnetic and gravity ground survey by SMMRP supports the interpretation of a magnetic heavier body at the site.		
	(iv) Kasongire in Masindi District (402000Me/222,000Mn)- Sheet 31/3	A soil geochemical survey across the geophysical anomaly mapped Sn, As, Ba and Au anomalies;		

Mineral	Location	Status of Reserves	Nature Progress and of Action	Uses
		Drilling undertaken by Sipa in Lamwo District intercepted nickel ore (magnetic sulphide) at depth. At grades of 0.37% Ni & 0.12% Cu was encountered.		
		Pre-feasibility studies and EIA by Samta in Arua District- Processing of nickel from laterites proved difficult at the time		
		Geophysical anomaly at Kasongoire confirmed by stream sediment surveys by Rizk, 1977. Nickel content in the ores -700-860 ppm		
		Ground gravity survey confirmed heavier rock (density 3.395 kg/cubic dm), which coincides with the magnetic anomaly (SMMRP 2010)		
		Stream sediment and soil surveys mapped anomalous values of Ni and Cu (SMMRP, 2010)		
		Mafic intrusions (narrow sills) have also been observed in the area, which could explain the Ni grades in the soil above the magnetic to the north of the magnetic anomaly.		
Rare Earth Elements (REE)	(i) Isolated pegmaties in south-western Uganda	73.6million tonnes of Rare Earth Element (REE) estimated at Sukulu, Tororo District	Largely underexplored	REE is crucial in making high-tech electronics products, such as highly specialised miniature nuclear batteries, lasers, repeaters, superconductors, and miniature magnets. The mineral is also used to produce automotive catalysts and petroleum cracking catalysts, flints for lighters, pigments for glass and ceramics and compounds of polished glass.
	(ii) Carbonatite centres in Eastern Uganda (Sukulu, Butiriku, Busuku, Napak)	Carbonatite Centres of Eastern Uganda at Bukusu in Manafwa District	Mining Lease granted to M/S Guangzhou Dong Song Energy Group Co., Ltd.	
	iii) Makuutu-Buwaaya area, Eastern Uganda.	REE world-class deposits discovered in aluminous clays at Makuutu, Bugweri District	M/S Rwenzori Rare Metals and Ionic Rare Earths acquired a mining lease at Makuutu	

FACTSHEET #2

4. How can Uganda Position itself in the Critical Minerals Agenda Globally?

With increasing discoveries of critical minerals like rare earth elements in eastern Uganda, graphite in Orom and Kitgum, and potential lithium and cobalt resources across the country, Uganda can position itself as an emerging player in the global critical minerals market. However, successful participation requires more than mineral abundance—it demands deliberate and strategic policy actions, which may include the following:

Strengthening regional cooperation and strategic partnerships: One of the most effective ways that African governments, including Uganda, can achieve their development goals is through increased regional collaboration. Strengthening intra-regional trade through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and regional economic communities can help mitigate the effects of global geopolitical shifts. A coordinated approach to minerals would strengthen the continent's collective leverage, prevent a "race to the bottom", and create opportunities for regional value chains that could attract external support. The African Union's endorsement of the African Green Minerals Strategy in February 2025 is a significant step towards collaboration, but much work remains.³⁸

Embedding transparency and accountability principles into decision-making: Through measures, such as contract transparency or parliamentary approval for major agreements, is essential in this more fraught environment. For example, Ghana's parliament has created space for essential public debate on weaknesses to be addressed as it reviews the country's first lithium mining agreement. Countries like Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone are meeting good practice by disclosing contracts under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which allows for transparency and accountability in the sector.³⁹ Though Uganda joined the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2020,⁴⁰ Uganda has not fully disclosed extractive contracts, according to the EITI reports.⁴¹

Promoting industrialisation and value chain development: One of the main challenges facing African economies, including Uganda, is the continued reliance on raw mineral exports, which limits value retention and economic transformation. To break this cycle, local processing and mineral-based industrialisation must be prioritised. Investments in local processing and manufacturing could generate employment, increase fiscal revenues and reduce dependency on volatile commodity exports. Strategic local content policies, modelled on best practices from Botswana and Chile, could help to develop domestic industries by requiring foreign mining companies to invest in local workforce training, technology transfer and infrastructure development.⁴² Though Uganda has made progress

38 See *As the West Turns Inward, Can Africa Leverage Its Mineral Power?*

39 *As the West Turns Inward, Can Africa Leverage Its Mineral Power?*

40 See <https://eiti.org/countries/uganda>

41 See *On lack of contract transparency in the extractives industry*

42 Diouf, A. (2025). *Towards Just Resource Exploitation in a Green Transition*. South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Retrieved from https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/SAIIA_

by banning raw mineral exports, the government needs to invest in the processing and beneficiation.⁴³

Research and Development: Green innovation and research must be prioritised to ensure that industrialisation aligns with sustainability goals. Encouraging research and development in renewable energy technologies and low-carbon mining techniques would position African countries as leaders in the global green economy. Developing strong value chains that integrate mineral extraction, processing, and high-value manufacturing would help African countries to capture more economic benefits, reduce reliance on commodity price fluctuations and drive long-term economic resilience.⁴⁴

Infrastructure development: The government's commitment to embark on infrastructure improvements, including power infrastructure and geothermal resources, among others, is key to the growth of this energy-intensive industry.⁴⁵

Ensuring equitable benefit sharing with local communities. To prevent social unrest and environmental injustices, green mineral revenues must be equitably distributed to benefit local communities. Mining activities often displace communities, deplete natural resources and exacerbate local inequalities. Without inclusive governance and fair resource sharing, the green transition could reinforce social tensions rather than alleviate them. A portion of mining revenues should be allocated to local development funds that finance healthcare, education and infrastructure.⁴⁶

Enhancing governance and strengthening fiscal frameworks: Strong governance and effective fiscal systems are essential for translating green mineral wealth into inclusive economic growth. Weak regulations, corruption, and opaque tax regimes have long undermined Africa's ability to maximise resource rents. To address this, Uganda should adopt progressive and adaptive taxation models that allow flexible fiscal adjustments. The critical minerals sector requires an Afro-centric policy, fiscal, and regulatory framework aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Africa Mining Vision, and the East African Community (EAC) vision.⁴⁷

5. Conclusions

Uganda's critical mineral industry holds substantial, largely untapped potential for both national economic transformation and global clean energy transitions. The rich geological endowment, particularly in critical minerals, presents an opportunity for the surging global demand for these resources. The flexibility in designating strategic minerals allows Uganda

PI_164_JustResourceExploitation.pdf

43 Uganda Bans Raw Mineral Exports: What It Means for the Mining Sector, accessed August 5, 2025, <https://thevoiceofafrica.com/2025/07/11/uganda-bans-raw-mineral-exports-what-it-means-for-the-mining-sector/>

44 Diouf, A. (2025). Towards Just Resource Exploitation in a Green Transition. South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Retrieved from https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/SAIIA_P1_164_JustResourceExploitation.pdf

45 See <https://www.pau.go.ug/ugandas-transformative-infrastructure-calculation/>

46 Diouf, A. (2025). Towards Just Resource Exploitation in a Green Transition. South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Retrieved from https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/SAIIA_P1_164_JustResourceExploitation.pdf

47 See <https://observer.ug/viewpoint/why-uganda-s-critical-minerals-industry-is-important/>

to adapt its priorities in response to dynamic global market demands. The government should leverage its mineral wealth as a primary driver to achieve its ambitious tenfold economic growth strategy. Government must expedite the development of all necessary regulations, strengthen institutional capacity for oversight and enforcement, and ensure community participation and benefit-sharing.



Global Financial Integrity (GFI) is a Washington, DC-based think tank focused on illicit financial flows, corruption, illicit trade and money laundering.

Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is an independent public policy research and advocacy think tank based in Uganda, working on a wide range of public policy issues. ACODE has for the last seven consecutive years been ranked in the Global go to Think tanks index report as one of the best think tanks in Uganda and globally.



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