



2008 Minerals Yearbook

BURUNDI

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF BURUNDI

By Thomas R. Yager

In 2008, Burundi's production of gold, limestone, niobium (columbium) and tantalum ore and concentrate, peat, sand and gravel, tin ore, and tungsten ore was not significant in global terms. Burundi was not a globally significant consumer of minerals. Manufacturing, mining, and energy accounted for nearly 11% of Burundi's gross domestic product in 2007 (the latest year for which data were available) (Banque de la République du Burundi, 2008, p. 2).

Production

In 2008, tantalum production increased by 79%; niobium, 64%; and tungsten, 35%. Tin output also increased sharply. From 2004 to 2008, niobium production increased by 257%, and tantalum production, by 225% (Damien Riragonya, Director General of Mines and Geology, Burundi Ministry of Energy and Mines, written commun., July 21, 2009).

Structure of the Mineral Industry

Privately owned Comptoir Minier des Exploitations du Burundi S.A. (COMEBU) and artisanal miners produced Burundi's gold, niobium, tantalum, tin, and tungsten. Gold reportedly was mined in Citiboke and Muyinga Provinces, and niobium, tantalum, tin, and tungsten were mined in Kayanza and Kirundo Provinces. State-owned Office National de la Tourbe (ONATOUR) was the country's only producer of peat.

Commodity Review

Metals

Cobalt, Copper, and Nickel.—Dwyka Resources Ltd. of Australia and BHP Billiton Ltd. of Australia engaged in exploration at Dwyka's Muremera Nickel project in northeast Burundi. BHP Billiton could earn 50% interest in the project if it spent \$5.2 million on exploration at Muremera. In the first phase of exploration, BHP Billiton spent \$4.2 million; the second phase started with a drilling program in the third quarter of 2008 (Dwyka Resources Ltd., 2008).

In June 2007, the Government canceled the license for the Musongati nickel deposit in southeast Burundi held by Argosy Minerals Inc. of Australia. Argosy filed complaints with the International Court of Arbitration in France in an attempt to regain control of the deposit. At the end of 2008, the dispute was unresolved (Mining Journal, 2007; Argosy Minerals Inc., 2009).

Gold.—Burundi's gold exports amounted to 2,170 kilograms (kg) in 2008. Between 500 and 1,000 kilograms per year were estimated to be produced locally by artisanal miners; the remainder was reportedly reexported from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (United Nations Security Council, 2007, p. 22).

International Gold Exploration AB (IGE) of Sweden engaged in exploration at the Butara gold deposit in northwestern Burundi in 2008. The company planned to complete its prefeasibility study of mining at Butara in 2009 and hoped to identify resources of at least 31,000 kg of contained gold (International Gold Exploration AB, 2008a, p. 35-37; 2008d, p. 5).

Niobium and Tantalum.—The Kabarore Mine produced niobium and tantalum on an artisanal scale. IGE engaged in exploration at Kabarore in 2008; the company was considering plans to start large-scale mining in a joint venture with COMEBU. In July, IGE decided to withdraw from Kabarore because characteristics of the deposit's ore restricted the recovery rate of tantalum pentoxide to 50%, which the company considered to be subeconomic (International Gold Exploration AB, 2008b).

Vanadium.—IGE engaged in exploration at the Mukanda vanadium deposit in 2008. The company planned to complete its prefeasibility study and reach a decision about investment in a new mine in 2009. Resources at Mukanda amounted to 17 million metric tons that graded 0.64% vanadium; IGE hoped to identify additional contained vanadium resources of nearly 100,000 metric tons. Based on favorable results from the study, the new open pit mine could produce 10,000 metric tons per year of vanadium pentoxide during a mine life of at least 20 years (International Gold Exploration AB, 2008a, p. 35-36; 2008d, p. 5).

Mineral Fuels and Related Materials

Peat.—ONATOUR produced peat from the Buyongwe, the Gisozi, the Gitanga, and the Matana deposits. The company's production declined by 23% in 2007 because of frequent mechanical problems with mining equipment (Banque de la République du Burundi, 2008).

Petroleum.—In October 2008, the Government awarded an exploration license for Block D on Lake Tanganyika to Surestream Petroleum Ltd. of the United Kingdom. Surestream planned to start exploration at Block D in June 2009 (Africa Energy Intelligence, 2009).

Uranium.—In July 2008, the Government awarded IGE an exploration license for the Musigati area in northwest Burundi. IGE planned to explore for uranium and gold at Musigati, which is adjacent to the Butara gold deposit (International Gold Exploration AB, 2008c).

References Cited

- Africa Energy Intelligence, 2009, Fire sale on Lake Tanganyika: Africa Energy Intelligence, no. 604, May 13, p. 4.
Argosy Minerals Inc., 2009, Appendix 5B—Mining exploration entity quarterly report for quarter ended 31 December 2008: South Perth, Australia, Argosy Minerals Inc., 6 p.
Banque de la République du Burundi, 2008, Evolution économique et financière du pays—Production, *in* Rapport annuel 2007: Bujumbura, Burundi, Banque de la République du Burundi, unpaginated.

Dwyka Resources Ltd., 2008, Muremera nickel project intersects nickel in second phase drilling: West Perth, Australia, Dwyka Resources Ltd. press release, October 27, 4 p.

International Gold Exploration AB, 2008a, Annual report 2007: Stockholm, Sweden, International Gold Exploration AB, 99 p.

International Gold Exploration AB, 2008b, IGE completes study and terminates option on Kabarore Colombo tantalite project: Stockholm, Sweden, International Gold Exploration AB press release, July 11, 1 p.

International Gold Exploration AB, 2008c, IGE granted a new exploration permit for uranium in Burundi: Stockholm, Sweden, International Gold Exploration AB press release, July 7, 1 p.

International Gold Exploration AB, 2008d, Interim report January–September 2008: Stockholm, Sweden, International Gold Exploration AB, 19 p.

Mining Journal, 2007, Argosy seeks order against Burundi Govt: Mining Journal, June 29, p. 4.

United Nations Security Council, 2007, Letter dated 16 July 2007 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council: New York, New York, United Nations Security Council, Report No. S/2007/423, 42 p.

TABLE 1
BURUNDI: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES¹

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity ²		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Gold, mine output, Au content ^c	kilograms	750 ^r	750 ^r	750 ^r	750 ^r	750
Niobium (columbium) and tantalum, ore and concentrate:						
Gross weight	do.	23,356	42,592	16,177	51,550	83,854
Nb content	do.	4,598	8,384	3,200	10,000	16,400
Ta content	do.	5,038	9,188	2,868	9,140	16,371
Peat		4,643	4,871	9,762	7,489 ^r	7,500 ^c
Tin, mine output:						
Gross weight		19	8	79	5	50
Sn content		9	4	46	2	21
Tungsten, mine output:						
Gross weight		24	295	668	455	608
W content		8	94	238	144	194

^cEstimated; estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits. ^rRevised. do. Ditto.

¹Table includes data available through August 28, 2009.

²In addition to the commodities listed, brick clay, limestone, and sand and gravel were produced, but available information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output.

TABLE 2
BURUNDI: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2008

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity		Major operating companies	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity ^c
Gold	kilograms	Artisanal miners	Citiboke and Musinga Provinces	750
Niobium (columbium) and tantalum, columbite-tantalite ore and concentrate		Comptoir Minier des Exploitations du Burundi S.A. (COMEBU)	Kabarore in Kayanza Province and Murehe in Kirundo Province	84
Peat		Office Nationale de la Tourbe (ONATOURE)	Buyongwe, Gisozi, Gitanga, and Matana	20,000 ¹
Tin, cassiterite ore and concentrate		Comptoir Minier des Exploitations du Burundi S.A. (COMEBU)	Murehe in Kirundo Province	190
Tungsten, wolframite ore and concentrate		Artisanal miners	Vumbi in Kirundo Province	38
Do.		do.	Busoni in Kirundo Province	37
Do.		do.	Kirundo in Kirundo Province	12

^cEstimated. Do., do. Ditto.

¹Reported figure.