

Government urged to safeguard interests of locals in mining reforms

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Zimbabwe is amongst several countries endowed with vast mineral deposits with diamond, gold and platinum-group of metals (PGMs) being the most economically significant natural resources out of 30 minerals and mineral-based commodities produced in the country. If well managed revenue from these resources is likely to see the country's citizenry out of poverty while catapulting it to its economic growth. This can only be achieved if the natural resource governance sector is well managed. Therefore, it remains critical to not only discuss the issue of natural resources governance but also ensure that communities derive meaningful benefits from the resources in their communities.

The 10th -12th October 2018 saw approximately 300 people drawn from mining communities, policy makers, civil society organisations, faith based organisations, traditional chiefs, academia and the media convening for the 7th edition of the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba which ran under the theme, "Accountable and Transparent Governance of Mineral Resources: Safeguarding Development Interests of Local Communities in Mining Sector Reforms."

The 7th edition of the ZAMI came at a time when Zimbabwe has reviewed several policies in its move to attract foreign direct investment and it was an opportune time for the communities to interrogate these policies and hold duty bearers accountable. Topical issues which were interrogated include; the urgent need to domesticate the Africa Mining Vision, Analysis of the amended Mines and Minerals Bill and finding possible ways of leveraging artisanal and small scale mining for sustainable rural economies. The importance of embracing responsible investments that would mitigate mining impacts on community rights, tax justice and curbing illicit financial flows among other critical issues were explored and critically discussed.



Figure 1: ZAMI participants follow proceeding

Fig 2: Norton Member of Parliament, Honourable Temba Mliswa responds to questions during the event

The participants managed to draw up issues that were incorporated in the 2018 ZAMI declaration and these include;

- The need for the formulation, adoption and implementation of inclusive policies that recognize women's participation in mining and increase equity and equality in the mineral value chain;
- Endorsement of legislative and policy measures that safeguard development interests of local small-scale women led investments;
- Enactment of legislation that makes it mandatory for mining investors to cede shares and promote community-based value addition and beneficiation;
- Parliament to promulgate a law that clearly outlines procedures for relocation and the benefits thereof while the Government should make it mandatory for every investor in the mining sector to acquire a social license before commencing operations;
- Enactment of a deliberate policy to maximize the linkages between agriculture and mining for the sustainable development of rural economies;
- Government to come up with an enabling policy and legal environment for community control and optimal benefits from mining through Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining. This is in line with Section 13 (4) of the constitution of Zimbabwe which speaks of national development in which the State is required to put in place mechanisms that ensure communities benefit from resources in their localities.

The participants of the 2018 ZAMI made a resolution to urgently explore innovative mechanisms to deal with wanton violence taking place in artisanal small scale mining. This comes in the wake of machete gang fights in Gwanda over gold mine claims. In this respect the #StoptheMachete campaign is to be rolled out soon.

ZAMI is an annual progressive multi stakeholder platform that facilitates discussion of Zimbabwe's mining sector and proffers policy, legislative and programming interventions to promote sustainable mineral resource exploitation. It is convened by the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association in partnership with the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches.