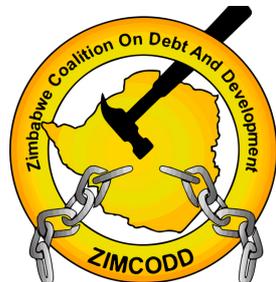
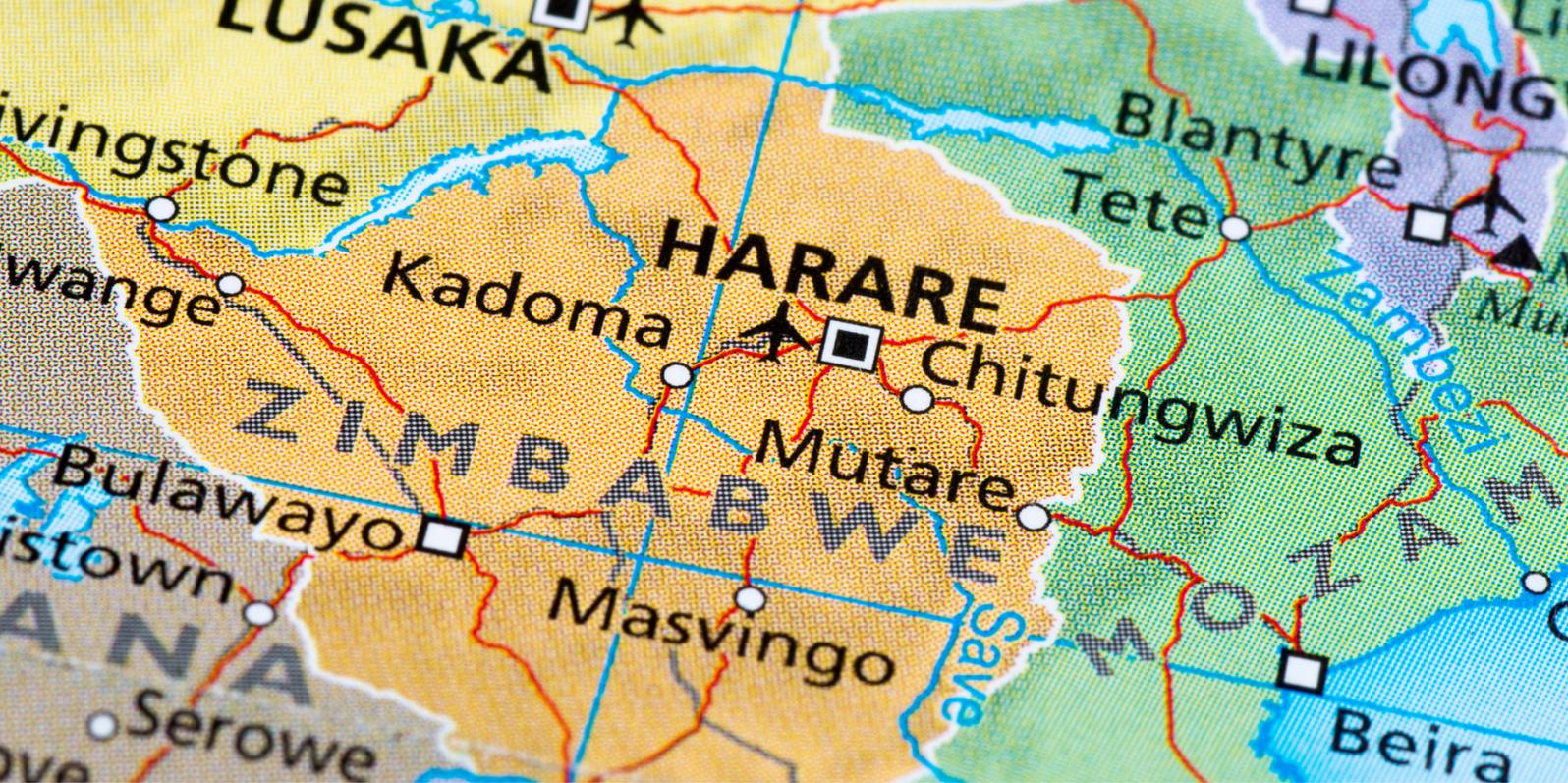




**CITIZEN VULNERABILITY: THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF
CLIMATE CHANGE, EXCLUSION & NATURAL
RESOURCE GOVERNANCE**

POLICY DIGEST JULY 2023





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1. Introduction

The July Policy Digest examines the vulnerability of citizens in the country utilising the data gathered during the ZIMCODD Ideas Festival held in Gokwe during period 19 to 21 July 2023. The participants of the Ideas Festival came from Kwekwe, Gokwe, Matobo and Goromonzi. In this digest, citizen's vulnerability is analysed under the prism of three thematic areas namely climate change, exclusion and natural resource governance. The effects of the mentioned thematic areas in facilitating misery and unhappiness in the aforesaid areas are brought to attention with the primary purpose of coming up with actionable policy interventions that can be leveraged on to enhance livelihood sustainability.

2. Contextualisation of key Terms

Citizen Vulnerability

There is no defining characteristic of vulnerability. Experts from a variety of fields use and define vulnerability differently, which causes multiple measuring techniques to be used to suit individual goals and interests. Due to the different elements of risk, household response, and welfare effects, approaches to defining vulnerability vary across disciplines. In that regard, this policy digest contextualises citizen vulnerability as a state of citizen defencelessness, weakness, exposure to harm.

Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

Exclusion

This policy digest views exclusion as the alienation of citizens in community and national economic governance.

Natural Resource Governance

Denotes the management of resources. It encompasses how decisions are made, who is involved in decision-making and the pricing of those resources.

3. Unpacking Factors Facilitating Citizen Vulnerability

This section unpacks factors that aggravate citizen vulnerability in the context of climate change, exclusion and natural resource governance. It is informed by the experiences shared by various participants at the Ideas Festival. A documentary review was also utilised to strengthen the submissions of the participants.



Exploitation of Mining Host Communities

- The participants lamented how mining host communities are being exploited by mining companies who are protected and insulated by the government. The majority of these companies who are at the forefront of exploitation belong to the Chinese. According to one participant from Goromonzi:

“The Chinese have taken over the entire Goromonzi area, they are everywhere mining gold and lithium. More than 15 trucks full of raw lithium leaves Goromonzi daily yet the community has nothing to show. Our youth are now drunkards and drug addicts, they are not given a chance to work.”

A submission which was reinforced by youth participant who stated that;

“There is no Hospital in Goromonzi, except for a non-functioning clinic which can not even cater for all the residence of Goromonzi. The roads and bridges are in a sorry state and this calls for immediate intervention. Provision of portable water remains a dream yet the extracted lithium and gold are at the apex of minerals that are on high demand globally.”

The same submission was made by women from Kwekwe, who lamented that:

Kwekwe is the hub and gateway of gold in Midlands, it is at the heart of mining in Zimbabwe. However, the city and surrounding communities have failed to fully benefit from mining activities. Service delivery continues to dilapidate while gold is extracted, the remaining archaic infrastructure is vandalised by “mashurugwi”. This can be evidenced by the collapse of Globe and Phoenix Primary School which left 18 pupils injured. Rather than being at the front of community development, mining in Kwekwe is facilitating the destruction of property.

Therefore, the data gathered from the participants is in line with documentary review from Mutoko¹ and Chiadzwa² where evidence shows that mining host communities are simply being exploited and not benefiting from mega-deals. This also shows that if no immediate policy intervention is made, the US\$ 12 billion mining vision will remain a fairytale and campaign gimmick that will never transform citizens’ livelihood. At the same time, the exploitation has exposed communities to different vulnerabilities which include but not limited to hunger, poor health care as well as dilapidating service delivery.

Exclusion in Economic Governance

The exclusion of women and youth in economic governance continues to alienate and relegate them in key economic decision-making positions. This is not limited to community level, but goes beyond district and provincial level all the way to national level. The women and youth who participated at the Ideas Festival lamented that they are not consulted when it comes to decisions and activities taking place in their communities.

1. <https://www.miningindex.co.zw/2020/11/12/zimbabwe-losing-significant-revenue-from-black-granite-in-illicitflows/#:~:text=Corruption%2C%20smuggling%2C%20lack%20of%20weighbridges%2C%20negligible%20royalties%20for,by%20fo reign%20investors%20at%20the%20expense%20of%20locals>
2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340235188_Forced_displacements_in_mining_communities_politics_in_Chiadzwa_diamond_area_Zimbabwe



A factor that has been attributed to underdevelopment, corruption, high cost of living and poor service delivery in their communities. According to one key informant from Gokwe;

“The economic decision-making system is tailored in a manner that facilitates citizen exclusion and vulnerability. This is because, citizens are never consulted or informed of any key developments or projects which the government might intend to undertake in our community. A good example is that of COTTCO which paid cotton famers with groceries without consulting them. A sad reality which undermines the small-holder farmer on the cotton value chain. It also further entrenches trade injustices.”

In light of the above, it with no doubt that the exclusion of citizens in decision-making has a negative impact on their livelihoods and welfare. This assertion is also reinforced by a participant and key informant from Matobo who stated that;

“The youth and women of Matobo are excluded from the budget making consultation every year. The economic welfare of their community is not prioritised, even when they are consulted their views are not included in the national budget. This can be exhibited by the ceremonial and pseudo budget consultations which were conducted in Matobo last year in October. A consultation which was done to tick the box and not meant for community transformation and greater citizen participation. As a result, our community is one of the most marginalised with dilapidating infrastructure which has successfully culminated in institutionalised inequalities.”

Evidence from a documentary review also suggests that, youth and women are institutionally excluded in key economic decision-making positions. This is not a Gokwe or Matobo challenge but rather a national challenge that has been used to undermine the will of the people. The detrimental effect of such alienation is that, citizen will not participate fully to projects and programs that are imposed on them by the government mainly because they do not capture their needs and aspirations. In addition, citizen vulnerability is also further entrenched because of government policies that are not people-centred. A national budget that does not capture the reality on the ground can not address the challenges being experienced by the citizens. In relation to the COTTCO payment system, a payment decision that does not cater for the welfare of the small-holder farmers facilitates poverty, misery and unhappiness.

Poverty And Hunger

Concerns relating to poverty and hunger were raised by participants at the Ideas Festival. Interesting to note was the interlinkage and interconnectedness of climate change, exclusion and natural resource governance in facilitating poverty and hunger. Undeniably, the effects of climate change have been more inimical, malignant and brutal to Zimbabwe than ever before.

This can be evidenced by the recurring cyclones, heatwaves, droughts and low rainfall patterns. According to one key informant from Matobo,

“Climate change has ushered in a new era of poverty and hunger in Matobo. Communities and villages have been left exposed to hunger and poverty. Malnutrition has become a common ally in the villages and communities thereby undermining people’s health and well-being.”

Gokwe has also not been spared by such erratic rainfall patterns and heatwaves which undermine agricultural production. A key informant from Gokwe stated that,

“Gokwe is in ecological region 4, a region which is known for low rainfall patterns and a haven of heatwaves and hunger as it is characterised by arid and semi-arid conditions receiving a minimum of 250mm of rain per year. The ecological environment of Gokwe is not suitable for agricultural crops such as maize, rice, bananas to mention but a few. As a result, villagers have resorted to growing cotton and other small grains which are known to be drought resilient. While this is commendable, this in a way has a bearing on the nutritional value intake of the community as there are other crops they cannot afford to grow.”

Gokwe and Matobo are among some of the rural communities that were surveyed during the 2022 ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment. The report from that assessment established that 38% of rural households are food insecure a number that is greatly disputable if one is to consider that more than half of the entire country is in extreme poverty³. Matebeleland North had the highest food insecurity with 58% households in need of food support. Some of the areas with the most insecure households are Hwange at 73%, Binga 71% and Buhera 75%. The humanitarian situational analysis from the report shows that, 3.8 million people from rural areas are food insecure despite reports and claims from the government about bumper harvest. Considerations on the attributes of hunger and poverty show that climate change is at the apex, followed by exclusionary government policies which facilitate government support mainly based on partisan affiliation thereby undermining climate change resilience.

Forced Migration

In Zimbabwe forced migration is two dimensional. It can be induced by the effect of climate change and unsustainable living conditions or the government and mining companies can evict people to pave way for mining operations. The communities which attended the Ideas Festival have experienced both. In Matobo and Gokwe, the participants stated that, *“majority of youth and men have left Zimbabwe for neighbouring countries in search of greener pastures due to unsustainable living conditions.”* For Kwekwe and Goromonzi, forced eviction were argued to be the primary driver of migration coupled with violence and intimidation.



In villages and farms surrounding Kwekwe, forced evictions have become common and often accompanied by death threats from “amashurugwi” the unruly small-scale artisanal miners who have proven to be above the law and problematic. To this end, if the government is sincere about attaining an upper-middle income economy by 2030 and a US\$ 12 billion mining vision by 2025 it must note that, any development which is not people centred will not bring community transformation and progress.

Family Dysfunctionality

One of the detrimental effects of mining activities in the communities is that it can lead to family dysfunction. Mining host communities have become cosmopolitan communities that attract people from different traditions, culture and beliefs. While this is great for cultural assimilation and human capital development, submission by key informants from Goromonzi and Kwekwe suggested otherwise. This is because, cases of divorces and infidelity are increasing. The Chinese are accused of taking people’s wives luring them with money. At the same time, in areas such as Gokwe and Matobo many men have left the country in search of greener pastures. Although some have remained responsible and work for their families, there is always an out layer, a remnant that has gone for good leaving their families at the mercy of poverty. Thus, climate induced hunger, exclusion of citizens in economic governance and natural resource governance exposes citizens to various vulnerabilities which undermine families culminating in family dysfunctional.

Land Degradation

Land degradation has become problematic in Gokwe, Matobo, Goromonzi and Kwekwe. It is happening under the watch of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) which has proven to be wanting with respect to fulfilling its mandate of protecting the environment. Artisanal small-scale miners and mining corporates have all been complementing each other in undertaking unsustainable mining activities. Submissions by key informants show that, deforestation is happening at a massive scale both in mining communities and non-mining communities. Riverbank farming in Gokwe and Goromonzi has also worsened the situation by promoting land degradation. Wet lands are also not exempted as they are being invaded for farming purpose. In an attempt to find fertile land, riverbank farming has brought more harm than good. It has made communities more vulnerable to climate change and its effects thereof. A key informant from Kwekwe reinforced the above by noting that;

Kwekwe has now become a danger to itself, the scale and magnitude of environmental degradation is alarming and demonstrates community as well as national ignorance of the effects of climate change. At this rate, if nothing is not done, the consequences will be detrimental. The collapse of the Globe and Phoenix Primary School is nothing but a tip of the iceberg.”



In addition, another key informant from Goromonzi stated that:

“Early January after lamentations from villagers over the manner and way in which Shengxiang was disregarding environmental laws. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) stepped in and found Shengxiang guilty of operating without conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Shengxiang was fined US\$ 100 000 and shut down to conduct an EIA barely a month late it was caught by EMA conducting operations again. Allegations raised by the community is that, someone within the highest echelons of power is guaranteeing and facilitating such illegal mining without taking consideration of environmental, social and economic impact on the community.”

Therefore, it is clear that, unless immediate action is taken, environmental degradation will continue. Thus, there is need for information dissemination on the impacts of environmental degradation and strengthening of institutions that are meant to oversee ecofriendly safety and ensure that eco-friendly farming and mining activities are undertaken.

4. Emerging Policy Alternatives

- **Community Ownership Development Fund (CODF):** In line with the principle of devolution as prescribed in the Constitution and the Devolution and Decentralisation Policy (DDP); the government must ensure that CODFs are put in place to facilitate community development and growth of mining host communities. The composition of CODF must be inclusive, prioritising youth and women. Punitive measures must be established to guarantee compliance of mining companies.
- **Community Mining Committee (CMC):** There is need to establish CMCs which will function as the nerve-centre of community voices and participation in key mining development activities. In line with community ownership and the principles of good governance which requires systematic consultation. Mining companies must constantly seek communities’ opinions with respect to their operations. This is also in line with the principle of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- **Establishment of Community Irrigation Schemes:** The Ministry of Agriculture must establish community irrigation schemes that are in line with smart agriculture technology to mitigate hunger and poverty.
- **Community Preservation and Consultations Before Eviction:** The government must establish a Community Preservation and Consultation Policy that facilitates talks and engagement between the government and community before any eviction. The policy must stipulate guidelines that must be followed whenever a community needs to be evicted for national development purpose. The people must always be prioritised over development. Possible ways and mechanisms of preserving community history and knowledge must be put in place.



- **Strengthen the Environmental Management Agency (EMA):** The EMA must be capacitated to bring to justice any person or organisation that might have been found wanting with respect to ecological protection. In addition, EMA officers must be stationed in every community like the way in which agriculture extension officers are stationed and accessible.
- **Reforestation And Environmental Protection Policy:** The government must establish a reforestation and environmental protection policy to safeguard and preserve the environment.

5. Conclusion

Every effective policy must be able to capture the reality on the ground thereby successfully address issues related to citizen vulnerability. It is the ambition of this Policy Digest for the government to harvest from these policy considerations for it to be able to create sound policies that addresses citizen concerns. Issues of exclusion, exploitation of mining host communities and climate change have proven to be a thorn in national development and there is need for immediate redress if Zimbabwe is to attain its upper middle-income status by 2030.

