



## THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

### ZIMCODD & PARTNERS HOST THE 8TH GENDER & EXTRACTIVES SYMPOSIUM

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA), ActionAid Zimbabwe, Christian Aid, Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) and Zimbabwe Association of Women in Mining (ZAWIMA hosted the 2024 Gender and Extractives symposium from 13-14 March in Harare. Women from across the country and different walks of life convened to deliberate on women's issues in a safe space seeking solutions to the challenges they face. The symposium ran in Women's Month in a time where the gender equality agenda has made significant gains while a lot more still remains to address the particular challenges that women face. On the agenda, we conversed on issues including Mining, Climate Change and Sexual Reproductive Rights. In attendance were women from different sectors across the country such as rural women, urban women, entrepreneurs, women in extractives, farming, churches etc.

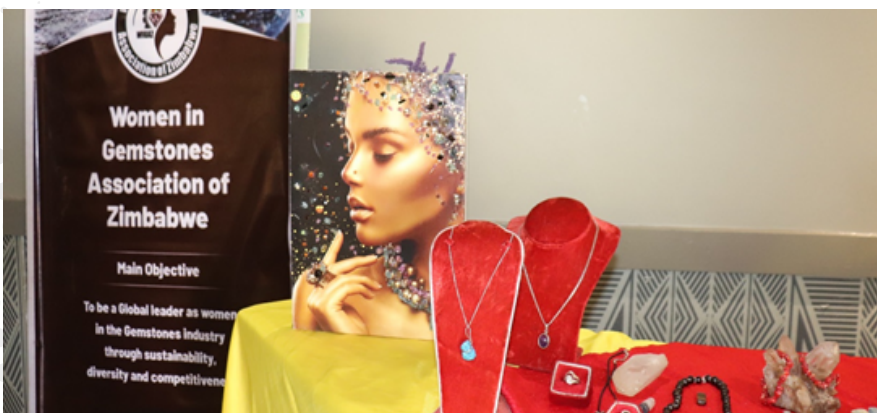
At this timely moment, we reflect on progress made in the advancement of gender equality. Globally, great strides have been made across the last few decades in advancing the equality agenda but more still remains to be done in ensuring optimal participation of women. From the conversation here, there are concerns about the continued exclusion of women in social, political and economic spaces for which their participation should be guaranteed. To note, 129 million girls are out of school, including 32 million of primary school age and 97 million of secondary school age.<sup>1</sup> In the same light, it's estimated that by 2030, 8% (342.4 million women and girls) of<sup>2</sup> the world's female population will fall into extreme poverty, living on less than \$2.50 per day. These stats indicate that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia- Ukraine war and the present global recession and cost of living crisis will hit women even more. In Zimbabwe, about 1 in 3 women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence and about 1 in 4 women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. Political leadership participation of women remains low as at 35% in Parliament and 16% in local government.<sup>3</sup> While 80% of Zimbabwe's women reside in rural areas, 70% are engaged in agriculture on land owned by men.<sup>4</sup> As such, their participation remains stunted as they have no decision-making power or tenure to use the land for collateral.

1. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

2. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

3. <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/zimbabwe>

4. <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/zimbabwe>



***On Display: Gemstone products for sale produced by the Women in Gemstones Association of Zimbabwe.***

### **Key Emerging points**

- Gender exclusion in employment (especially in the extractives sector) still remains and prioritizes men. This raises the need for continued advocacy and campaigning for equality especially calling out the institutions known to discriminate.
- Women in mining are facing challenges of cultural norms in rural areas as some women are denied access into mines on their menstrual period (as this causes gold to 'disappear') which implies a couple of days every month with no income.
- There's a lack of adequate information sharing from government initiatives (such as Women's bank) to the people, especially rural women. As such, many opportunities pass them by.
- Collateral security remains a challenge that women face accessing capital and loans from the Women's Bank among other public initiatives providing support.

### **Recommendations**

- Continued Investment in Women's Economic empowerment through mentorship, loans etc. supporting female entrepreneurs.
- Increased learning, knowledge and advocacy campaigns ensuring girls across the country remain in school, especially in rural Zimbabwe.
- Sustained promotion of women and girls taking up Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based education.

- Supporting improved quality of education delivery for women (gendered service delivery). Beyond access, improved quality will ensure better opportunities to improve their participation, health and well-being.
- Improved Maternal health services to reduce loss of mothers in labor and the first 1000 days of a child's life which are critical to survival.
- Funding gender and climate responsive Agricultural rural development.