

PRESS RELEASE

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ZIMCODD, ZCC & ZELA to host the 13th Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) 2024

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), and the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) host #ZAMI2024 from October 28 to November 1 2024. The 13th edition of ZAMI will take place in Bulawayo under the theme “Energy Transition Minerals: Putting Communities First for Community Development.” This event aims to transform structural inequalities in Africa's extractive industries. The event will gather stakeholders from mining communities, government representatives, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), Civil Society Organizations (CSO's), among many others to deliberate on mining-related issues in Zimbabwe, focusing on energy transition minerals and their impact on marginalized communities.

#ZAMI2024 occurs amid a global shift towards a Net-Zero Economy driven by the Paris Agreement. Achieving net-zero goals by 2050 will require a vast supply of critical minerals- copper, nickel, lithium, and cobalt—used in renewable energy technologies such as solar panels and electric vehicles. Zimbabwe, a key player in the global lithium market, holds the largest lithium reserves in Africa and has attracted over US\$1 billion in investments for lithium mining. In 2022, the country ranked as the world's sixth-largest lithium producer, with the potential to meet up to 20% of global lithium demand in the future. Discussions during ZAMI 2024 will be shaped by these developments, focusing on how Zimbabwe can utilise its rich mineral endowment to drive sustainable development. The indaba also comes amid ongoing legal reforms in Zimbabwe's mining sector, including amendments to the Mines and Minerals Act, Environmental Management Act, and the introduction of a Climate Change Bill.

Key Themes and Issues

Energy Transition

The transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is a global necessity and Zimbabwe is uniquely positioned to contribute with its vast reserves of critical minerals. However, challenges such as energy access, especially for marginalized communities persist. ZAMI will focus on the need for a just transition that prioritizes the needs of women and local communities, ensuring that all have access to reliable and affordable energy.

Inequality and Illicit Financial Flows

Mining activities in Zimbabwe have exacerbated poverty and inequality, particularly in mining host communities, which often see little benefit from the resources extracted from their lands. Communities face problems such as displacement, environmental degradation and poor infrastructure. Additionally, illicit financial flows worsen gender inequalities, diverting resources away from essential public services like healthcare and education.

Responsible Mining

The Government of Zimbabwe has launched a Responsible Mining Audit to ensure mining operations comply with national laws, focusing on preventing environmental damage and human rights abuses. While gaps still exist, this initiative is a step toward ensuring sustainable mining practices. Investors also have a role to play in supporting a just transition through inclusive economic strategies.

Mining-Induced Displacements

Mining-induced displacements disproportionately affect women leading to increased vulnerability to gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods and diminished access to basic services. Communities such as Buhera and Penhalonga face ongoing challenges in accessing water, healthcare and education after displacement, highlighting the need for responsible and consultative mining practices.

Environmental Degradation

Mining in Zimbabwe has led to severe environmental degradation particularly in regions like Chiadzwa, Penhalonga and Mutoko. These activities have caused deforestation, water pollution and loss of biodiversity, devastatingly impacting local communities. ZAMI will emphasize the importance of integrating women's voices into environmental decision-making processes as they are often the most affected by such degradation.

The goal of the Indaba is to promote responsible mining practices that take the needs of local communities into account. The event will provide a space for dialogue between the government, mining companies and community representatives to ensure that everyone has a voice in how resources are used. By bringing together different stakeholders, ZAMI 2024 aims to make sure that mining contributes to Zimbabwe's development, rather than causing harm. Expected outcomes from the event include practical recommendations for improving the transparency and accountability of the mining sector. The Indaba will also propose ways to ensure that local communities benefit from mining activities. A key focus will be on creating policies that address the specific needs of women and youth so that they are not left behind in the country's development.

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