



# THE Weekend Reader

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Social & Economic Justice"

## CHALLENGES FOR SMALL-SCALE AND ARTISANAL MINERS: NOTES FROM THE SHURUGWI DAMI



This edition of the weekend reader focuses on some of the glaring opportunities and challenges that continue to affect the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) sector that were shared during the Shurugwi District Alternative Mining Indaba (DAMI) which was held by ZIMCODD, ZCC and ZELA on the 21st of May 2021.

The DAMIs are part of the Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) movement that hosts Indabas at district, national and regional level to discuss and profile the mining sector's contributions as well as its social, economic and environmental impacts from the perspective of mining affected communities, Civil Society and Faith Based organisations. These spaces have been created to equalise the narrative

of the Mining Indabas that are often exclusively held between mining companies and governments and dominated by discussions of mining investments and profits.

The Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Mines identified the Mining sector as one of the key economic sectors which are likely to spearhead quick economic turnaround for the country. This view that mining is a strategic sector is shared by citizens and civil society organisation. However, there are concerns over how this sector is poorly managed and has failed to facilitate benefits to the majority of citizens especially the mining host communities.



Located in the Midlands, Shurugwi is endowed with minerals such as gold, chrome and platinum. Of particular interest to ZIMCODD, ZCC and ZELA are the opportunities and challenges of Small-scale and artisanal mining. Through the DAMI, the organisations sought to raise awareness on the importance for legislative and policy reforms to the mining sector so that it contributes to economic recovery and development.

Discussions at the DAMI noted that although policy reforms are essential for smooth running of the mining sector, miners are also expected to extract minerals responsibly. At the same time the smooth running of the Shurugwi Rural District Council should be leveraged on the consistent revenue collection from the small-scale and artisanal miners. However, the potential of artisanal miners has not been harnessed as they remain unregulated and a big source of resource leakages.

**The following issues are some of the key challenges raised during the DAMI:**

**Mining in Shurugwi remains a source of livelihood for the majority of community members** including women who are taking care of their families. The ASM eco-system includes women who are either involved in mining as small-scale miners or sellers to small-scale miners. **However, women miners**

**expressed concern over the costly fees to the District Development Committees (DDC) for permission to mine.**

**Corruption by police and raids by violent gangs.** A major issue which was repeatedly raised was that of “black boots” who are corrupt police officials who demand bribes from the Artisanal miners and “mabhembra” who are matchet wilding gangs that raid their operations and seize their ore. Law enforcers were reported to have failed to handle this issue of raids and corruption. Police whose duty is to protect citizens have been labelled corrupt and citizens fear reporting cases as some even noted that some police will gather intelligence instead of supporting the aggrieved because they also own illegal gold mines. The police responded that they were working on the development of the country and protection of its people. The police representative encouraged the participants to report cases of corruption at all levels. On the issue of “black boots” the policeman gave feedback that it was a genuine operation by police to enforce law with regards to illegal miners and to maintain peace.

**Inconsistency has also been noted in the execution of duties by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA).** The artisanal miners challenged the approach of EMA of treating them as unreasonable offenders when there have not been any efforts aimed at providing trainings on legal procedures to be followed in mining. On the issue of land rehabilitation, there are cases where the miners damaged the environment, EMA was questioned on their action plan to repair the damages. For solutions EMA responded that they work with DDC on mobilisation of resources, EMA also raised the challenge of incapacitation to cover the whole district as it is being served by one EMA official and this is the case in many other districts.

**Legalisation and Formality.** The Artisanal miners also advocated for recognition in the mining industry and appealed for tolerance and trainings on conducting their business legally. Youth Artisanal miners raised concern of being marginalised in the mining industry and expressed their dissatisfaction as they are not benefitting from mining as there are no deliberate effort to create opportunities in mining for the youth. Small-scale miners’ major issue was that of regularisation of their mines. They were appealing for assistance with a clear outline on procedures of legalising their mines and putting in place affordable fees.

**Financial Losses due to delayed payments** is another challenge which women miners are facing. At times by the time the payment will be done by Fidelity Printers the rates will be lower than when they would have made their sale. The miners were concerned about Fidelity payment policy, of not buying less than their threshold which is a major hindrance for the artisanal miners. Small-scale miners expressed that they were being side-lined and receiving unfair treatment

in comparison to large-scale miners who are rich and can afford to pay bribes. They outlined the difficulty of legalising when the system is very corrupt and has loopholes.

**The DAMI made calls to government so that it can leverage on the ASM sector and ensure that it contributes to the overall development of the community and the country. Government was recommended to:**

- Create a platform for youths to participate and benefit from the mining sector.
- Ensure that the mining sector recognises artisanal miners, PWDs, youth and women.
- Ensure that registration by the Ministry of Mines must involve consultation with RDC.
- Provide mechanism for the promotion of transparency and access to information and development of a mining cadastral that shows the quantum of minerals and their distribution.
- Promote wider participation of stakeholder and community members at the RDC level by ensure that the RDC consults people and engage them for dialogue instead of only relying on Councillors to represent the whole ward in decisions which concern their livelihoods.



Shurugwi DAMI

The Shurugwi DAMI raised critical issues that do not only affect mining at the local level but also at the national level. These issues include the need for the public to speak up on cases of corruption and provide proof when they have it to the relevant offices. The DAMI also noted that there are some Chinese miners in the Great Dyke area that are irresponsibly extracting minerals and causing mass environmental degradation without rehabilitation.