



**ZIMCODD**

# WEEKEND READER

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

## The Iron Fist and the Empty Pockets: How Zimbabwe's Mining Free-for-All Breeds Poverty

Zimbabwe's extensive mineral resources, including gold, platinum, and diamonds, have long been viewed as the cornerstone for achieving inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Yet despite this vast potential, the mining sector has not delivered broad-based prosperity. Weak regulatory frameworks, limited community participation, and inconsistent enforcement of laws have allowed the benefits of mining to remain concentrated among a few, while surrounding communities continue to experience poverty, environmental degradation, and social exclusion.



Source: Share America



The country's mining governance system remains highly centralized, with decision-making and revenue collection controlled largely at the national level. This structure limits transparency and restricts the ability of local communities to influence or monitor mining activities within their areas. The uneven enforcement of regulations has created an environment where illegal mining, revenue leakages, and informal operations flourish. These governance gaps reduce the developmental impact of mineral wealth and hinder the equitable distribution of benefits to citizens.

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) has emerged as a key source of livelihood for many Zimbabweans, particularly in rural areas. However, the sector continues to face serious challenges related to labour rights, safety, and security. Informal miners often work under dangerous conditions, lack access to proper protective equipment, and have little recourse when subjected to violence or exploitation. Reports of forced displacement and informal taxation by various actors highlight the need for formalization and stronger local governance mechanisms that can protect livelihoods while maintaining order.

The environmental impact of mining is equally concerning. Gold and chrome extraction have contributed to widespread deforestation, water pollution, and land degradation. In provinces such as Manicaland, residents have reported contaminated water sources, destruction of farmland, and structural damage to homes caused by blasting from nearby mines. These environmental effects threaten both public health and long-term food security, and they erode the natural resource base on which rural economies depend.

Economically, Zimbabwe continues to lose significant revenue due to mineral smuggling and illicit financial flows. Estimates suggest that more than one billion US dollars is lost annually through illegal trade and underreporting, representing funds that could otherwise be directed toward schools, hospitals, and essential infrastructure. Given that mining accounts for over half of the country's total export earnings, these losses undermine fiscal stability and the achievement of national development targets. Addressing transparency and traceability within the mining value chain is therefore critical to unlocking the sector's true potential.



Source: Mining Technology



Creator: ZOHRA BENSEMRA | Credit: REUTERS

To address these challenges, the mining sector requires comprehensive reform aimed at decentralization, transparency, and sustainability. Devolving regulatory authority and revenue management to provincial and district levels would strengthen accountability and ensure that local communities play an active role in decision-making. Enhanced revenue management mechanisms, including the introduction of a progressive resource rent tax during commodity booms, could help fund local infrastructure, social services, and environmental rehabilitation. Formalizing artisanal mining through simplified licensing systems and access to technical support would improve compliance while protecting vulnerable workers, particularly women and youth.

At the same time, stronger enforcement of environmental and labour standards is needed to safeguard both people and ecosystems. All mining operations should be held accountable to rigorous environmental impact assessments and occupational safety requirements. Ensuring that anti-corruption, labour, and environmental agencies operate independently and transparently will be essential to rebuilding public confidence in the sector.

With deliberate policy action, Zimbabwe's mineral wealth can become a foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth rather than a source of inequality and conflict. Transforming the mining industry into a driver of community-centered development requires a commitment to fairness, accountability, and environmental stewardship. If managed effectively, the country's minerals can provide not just economic returns, but the social and ecological renewal needed to secure a more equitable future.

## Reflections on Zimbabwe's 2025 State of the Nation Address

The 2025 State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered by the President in Parliament offered an opportunity to reflect on Zimbabwe's policy direction and economic outlook. While it outlined several areas of progress and optimism such as growth projections and gains in manufacturing it also raised important questions about how legislative and fiscal reforms can better align with the country's constitutional and developmental aspirations.

One key area that deserves attention is the Public Finance Management (PFM) framework. The SONA did not reference the long-awaited Public Finance Management Amendment Bill of 2011, a critical reform to align the current PFM Act with Section 298 of the Constitution. Strengthening this law would enhance fiscal discipline, promote transparency, and ensure that every dollar spent contributes to national development priorities. Continued engagement between Parliament, the Treasury, and civil society will be essential to move this reform forward in the spirit of accountability and collaboration.

Another area that merits closer attention is public debt management. Public debt remains a pressing issue, with varying figures from national and international institutions USD21 billion according to government estimates and USD23.3 billion as per the IMF's 2025 Article IV Report. Clear, consistent reporting on debt levels and repayment strategies would help build confidence among citizens, investors, and development partners. By fostering open dialogue around debt sustainability, Zimbabwe can take practical steps toward a more transparent and resilient fiscal future.

On the social front, it was notable that the SONA did not mention the National Health Insurance Bill, a policy framework that many Zimbabweans see as key to achieving universal health coverage. Given the challenges facing public healthcare rising out-of-pocket costs, shortages of medicines, and limited access in rural areas accelerating this bill could be transformative. A well-resourced national health insurance system would not only protect vulnerable households but also strengthen the broader social contract between citizens and the state.

The economic outlook presented in the SONA was largely positive, projecting a 6% growth rate in 2026. This is encouraging, particularly as manufacturing now contributes 15.6% to GDP, signaling potential for industrial recovery. To sustain and expand this growth, future budgets should prioritize research and development (R&D) as a driver of innovation, competitiveness, and job creation. Similarly, fully capacitating State-Owned Enterprises could catalyze industrialization and provide decent employment opportunities across sectors.

Ultimately, the SONA provides a useful foundation for dialogue on how Zimbabwe can balance growth with inclusivity, reform with stability, and investment with accountability. The focus going forward should be on collaborative implementation where government, Parliament, civil society, and the private sector work together to ensure that policy commitments translate into tangible improvements in people's lives.

If the commitments expressed in the SONA are matched by openness, consistency, and collective effort, then Zimbabwe can indeed move closer to a transparent, equitable, and sustainable economic future.



## Harare Residents demand action as Lake Chivero pollution worsens despite disaster declaration



**By Trymore Tagwirei**

Harare-residents have renewed calls for the government to urgently strengthen environmental laws and take decisive action to protect the Upper Manyame Catchment area, following worsening pollution in Lake Chivero, the capital's main water source.

Residents groups and environmental advocates warned that unchecked industrial waste, raw sewage and weak enforcement of environmental laws are pushing the lake toward ecological collapse. Lake Chivero, a Ramsar-designated wetland of international importance, continues to suffer heavy contamination from untreated effluent and chemical discharges.

Despite the crisis declaration, the City of Harare is reportedly still discharging raw sewage directly into the lake, worsening the water quality and threatening millions of urban residents who depend on it for drinking water.

Reuben Akili, Director of the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), said pollution levels in the Upper Manyame Catchment have reached alarming and unsustainable levels, with major tributaries such as the Mukuvisi River now heavily contaminated with industrial waste, agrochemicals, sewage and even traces of cyanide.

“Our research shows that existing laws are fragmented and inconsistently enforced. The Water Act and the Environmental Management Act are not aligned, leaving serious gaps that polluters exploit. Akili criticized the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and local authorities for failing to uphold environmental regulations, revealing that over 300 industries around Harare are operating without waste pre-treatment facilities in direct violation of the law.



Source: CNRG Zimbabwe

It's now cheaper for them to pollute than to comply with the law. Harare City Council discharges 40 to 50 raw sewage mega litres per day in Lake Chivero.

This is no longer about dirty rivers, it's about whether Harare will still have safe, clean drinking water in the years to come."

Meanwhile, conservationist Garry Stafford, owner of Kuimba Shiri Bird Sanctuary, has launched a Lake Chivero Revival Campaign aimed at restoring the lake's ecosystem through clean-up drives, awareness campaigns, and sustainable community projects.

Environmentalists have warned that without urgent government action to stop the City of Harare's sewage discharges and industrial pollution, the damage to Lake Chivero could soon become irreversible endangering public health and the entire water supply network for the capital.

# When the Ground Speaks: Stories of Communities Resisting Extraction in Southern Africa

*By Dorcus Norupiri*

When the ground shakes not from an earthquake but from the rumble of mining machinery, communities across Southern Africa have learned to listen and to speak back. From the sacred mountain of Mutare to the gas fields of Mozambique, the poisoned soils of Kabwe, and the shores of Xolobeni, people are reshaping the story of extraction into one of resilience, dignity, and justice.

**In Mutare, Zimbabwe,** resistance began quietly when residents discovered that a Chinese company had been secretly granted rights to quarry Danganvura Mountain considered sacred without consultation or an environmental assessment. Outraged, community groups, youth networks, and civil society united, taking the City Council to court and demanding transparency. Within months, public pressure forced the council to suspend the project. The mountain remained untouched a victory for collective action.

**In Cabo Delgado, Mozambique,** the story takes a different turn. Along the Rovuma Basin, the government negotiated a stronger deal for its citizens in a major LNG project involving ExxonMobil, Eni, and CNPC. Beyond royalties, Mozambique secured jobs, training, and social investments. By 2025, the project had contributed over US\$200 million in taxes and bonuses, and Eni pledged billions toward local participation. While tensions remain, Cabo Delgado demonstrates that when governments negotiate from strength, extraction can build not just take.

**In Kabwe, Zambia,** the legacy of mining tells a painful story. Decades after lead and zinc operations ceased, contamination continues to haunt the town. Studies show that over 95% of children near the former mine have elevated lead levels, and families still live amid toxic waste. Residents call for cleanup and medical support, but action remains slow. Kabwe stands as a warning that when mining ends without responsibility, communities continue to pay the price.

**In Xolobeni, South Africa,** resistance became law. For over a decade, the Wild Coast community opposed a titanium mining project that threatened ancestral land. In 2018, the Pretoria High Court affirmed their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent before any mining could proceed. The ruling set a precedent: no development without the people's voice.

Across these stories runs a clear thread community participation and negotiation power determine whether extraction heals or harms. Mining can build schools or destroy them, bring clean water or pollution, empower or exploit. The difference lies in who gets to decide.

As Africa enters a new era of mineral demand driven by the global energy transition, these stories remind us that the ground remembers everything the hum of the drills, the songs of resistance, and the silence after the machines leave.



# SEJA Spotlight for the week:

**Blessing Rumbidzayi Makunde  
Class of 2020**



Blessing Rumbidzayi Makunde is a passionate educator and community development practitioner from Marondera, Zimbabwe, whose work embodies dedication to advancing socio-economic justice from the grassroots. A proud member of the SEJA 2020 cohort, Blessing has devoted her leadership to empowering women, girls, and young people through education, health awareness, and civic participation.

Growing up in peri-urban farming communities, she witnessed how poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare affected children and young women. These experiences inspired her lifelong commitment to creating inclusive spaces where communities can thrive through knowledge, dignity, and opportunity. Her work continues to challenge systemic barriers while promoting fair access to essential public services.

Blessing's advocacy focuses on dismantling gender inequality and menstrual stigma, improving access to quality education, raising mental health awareness, and encouraging accountability in public resource management. Through various community-based organizations, she has led community dialogues, youth forums, and empowerment workshops that equip citizens with practical knowledge on menstrual hygiene, human rights, and civic engagement.

Beyond Zimbabwe, Blessing has built impactful international partnerships across the UK, Canada, India, New Zealand, and Australia to support menstrual dignity and educational access initiatives. She has facilitated workshops in Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Zambia, promoting inclusive education and menstrual health management, and has convened conversations between residents and local authorities to strengthen transparency and service delivery.

Her community empowerment work is both innovative and sustainable. Blessing has trained women and girls to produce reusable sanitary pads for personal use and income generation, supported literacy and inclusive learning for children with disabilities, and integrated mental health awareness into community development activities. These initiatives reflect her belief that true development is achieved when communities are empowered to drive their own change.

In recognition of her outstanding contributions, Blessing was named the 2025 WAKATI Trust Unsung Heroine – Community Champion and listed among the GoGetter Network's 100 Phenomenal Women in Zimbabwe. Her leadership continues to inspire many across the region to act with compassion, integrity, and purpose.

*“Service to humanity is the best work of life. The world can be a better place — it begins with you and me.”*

# Opportunities



## **Head of Operations uncommon Zimbabwe**

<https://uncommon.org/careers/head-of-operations>

## **Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP) is hiring a Program Associate (Remote in English-speaking African Countries)**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RIHcKE-OJrN\\_EUpmSpdsv0GuliGUmDUqI9EQ4pKIJMw/preview?tab=t.0#heading=h.17avj417y7dt](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RIHcKE-OJrN_EUpmSpdsv0GuliGUmDUqI9EQ4pKIJMw/preview?tab=t.0#heading=h.17avj417y7dt)

## **Multiple Positions Karo Platinum Mine in Zimbabwe**

<https://tharisa.mcidirecthire.com/external/currentopportunities>

## **National Consultant to Design and Develop a Social Media Engagement Toolkit, Harare, Zimbabwe, 21 days (Open to Zimbabwe Nationals Only)**

<https://jobs.unicef.org/en-us/job/585445/national-consultant-to-design-and-develop-a-social-media-engagement-toolkit-harare-zimbabwe-21-days-open-to-zimbabwe-nationals-only>

## **MenEngage Global Alliance is hiring a Communications Officer (Remote)**

<https://menengage.zohorecruit.in/jobs/Careers/201255000000349226/Communications-Officer-Global-Secretariat-of-MenEngage-Alliance>

## **Afrodad Internship Program**

[https://www.afrodad.org/sites/default/files/vacancy/Jan%20-%20June%20Call%20for%20Internship%20Program%202026\\_EN.pdf](https://www.afrodad.org/sites/default/files/vacancy/Jan%20-%20June%20Call%20for%20Internship%20Program%202026_EN.pdf)

## **Head of Project (Project Manager)**

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/welthungerhilfe-zimbabwe\\_job-advert-head-of-project-harvest-activity-7389894113724305408-Fa3d?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAACktsTIBYP3xzWaCsMO464laeWCSuA](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/welthungerhilfe-zimbabwe_job-advert-head-of-project-harvest-activity-7389894113724305408-Fa3d?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAACktsTIBYP3xzWaCsMO464laeWCSuA)