

THE

WEEKLY



CASE STORIES OF HOPE, IMPACT AND TRANSFORMATION: STACAP - CNRG CONTRIBUTIONS



Welcome Note

I am extremely proud to share these inspiring stories of hope, impact, and transformation which chronicle great victories scored by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance over the past 5 years. They are a testament to the unwavering commitment of our team and the resilience of the communities we serve.

Since September 2019, CNRG has been in a USAID-supported Strengthening Transparency, Accountability, and Civic Participation (STACAP) consortium with the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA). The support from USAID enabled us to reach the unreached, respond to emergencies, empower local communities, amplify their voices, influence policy, and drive positive change in the face of natural resource governance challenges. The stories outlined below only capture achievements of CNRG work under the STACAP activity.

Although this activity took place in difficult circumstances, CNRG managed to influence behavior change across a spectrum of actors ranging from communities, extractive industries, local authorities, parliament, and central government.

The case studies presented here showcase our successes in halting destructive mining projects, protecting our national parks from mining, defending community land rights, and protecting ecologically sensitive areas. These achievements were made possible by our strategic advocacy initiatives, effective community mobilization tactics, tireless engagement with government entities and civil society partners, and support from our partners.

I am glad to report that through CNRG interventions over the past five years, tens of thousands of villagers were saved from displacement, and legislative reforms were initiated, which are still ongoing. Above all, CNRG has immensely contributed to raising public awareness regarding

Zimbabwe's natural resource endowment, the need to account for these resources, and encouraging Zimbabwean citizens to develop an interest in the management of natural resources. There is now a healthy debate on natural resource governance, with resource-rich and the general public increasingly demanding greater accountability and a fair share of proceeds from their natural resource.

CNRG is grateful to USAID for the support and to ZELA which served as the Prime of this consortium. In addition, I would like to thank our hard-working team – Finance, Admin, and Programs, past and present, for their selfless dedication to implementing this activity in extremely challenging circumstances. Finally, I thank our Board of Trustees for their oversight role, leadership, and expertise which have kept us focused on our mission and goal of defending communities affected by extractive industries.

I invite you to read these stories of hope and to share your feedback on how we can serve our communities better.

To all our partners, thank you for your continued support and interest in our work.

Sincerely,

Farai Maguwu

Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG)



Irresponsible Mining Exposed: CNRG's Advocacy Triumph at Premier Estate

In 2023, CNRG responded to distress calls from Premier Estate near Mutare, where Zimgold, a Belarusian company and its subsidiaries, were conducting unsafe mining activities along the Mutare River and nearby hills. Blasting operations on the hills were causing fly rocks that damaged homes and endangered lives and livestock. On November 17th, 2023, CNRG petitioned Parliament to intervene.



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Following CNRG's compelling presentation, the committees summoned government officials who acknowledged awareness of the grievances raised in the petition.

In a significant development on May 20th, 2024, CNRG Director Farai Maguwu addressed the parliamentary Joint Committees on Mines and Mining Development, and Environment and Tourism.

Following CNRG's compelling presentation, the committees summoned government officials who acknowledged awareness of the grievances raised in the petition. Parliament has committed to conduct a field visit to Premier Estate and compile a report with recommendations for relevant ministries.

Initially dismissed and seemingly lost in bureaucratic limbo, the petition gained renewed attention through CNRG's persistent media advocacy efforts, exposing irregularities and prompting parliament to revisit the issue. CNRG acknowledges the pivotal role played by local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society

Organizations (CSOs) in spearheading advocacy efforts, shedding light on environmental degradation and compelling parliament to hold mining companies accountable. All this was made possible with the support from USAID's STACAP activity - ably demonstrating our capabilities of working with Government entities.

This campaign underscores CNRG's commitment to environmental justice and accountability, advocating for responsible mining practices and ensuring communities' safety and well-being in mining-affected areas like Premier Estate.



Community-Led Participation Halts Coal Project in Zimbabwe's Dinde: Advocacy Sparks Parliamentary Action, Protecting Villagers and Environment.



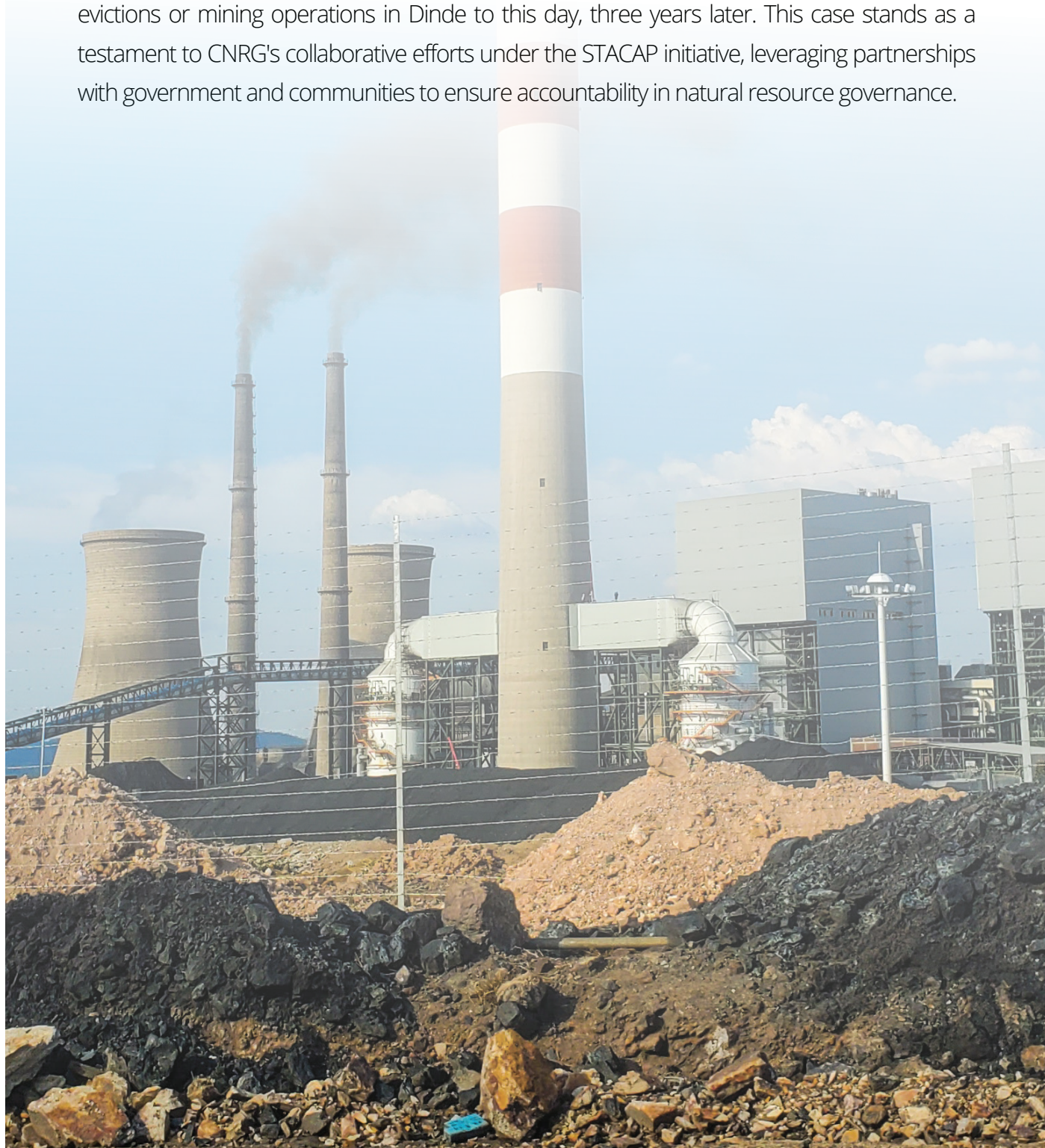
In January 2021, CNRG received an urgent plea from a senior government official regarding Beifer Investments, a Chinese company poised to mine coal in Dinde, Hwange. Acting swiftly through our rapid response system, we engaged with local leaders who were unaware of the looming project, which had bypassed mandatory consultations under Zimbabwean law.

With backing from USAID's supported STACAP, CNRG launched civic education efforts to enlighten the community about

the potential impacts of the proposed mining activities. Through intensive Right2SayNo workshops, meetings and collaboration with the Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST) - a leading parliamentary technical lead in Zimbabwe, also supported by USAID, we equipped the Dinde community with skills in petition writing. In addition, CNRG builds community skills on negotiation, human rights, advocacy and community-led campaigns.

Empowered by these trainings, the community crafted a compelling petition to Parliament, prompting swift action. Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Environment conducted a thorough investigation in Dinde, culminating in a report that recommended crucial amendments to the Environmental Management Act. These amendments aimed to enforce rigorous standards for stakeholder consultations by registered consultants.

As a direct consequence, the Beifer Investments Project was promptly halted, preventing any evictions or mining operations in Dinde to this day, three years later. This case stands as a testament to CNRG's collaborative efforts under the STACAP initiative, leveraging partnerships with government and communities to ensure accountability in natural resource governance.



Guarding Chilonga: Battle to Preserve, protect and defend Land Rights

In 2021 CNRG supported the community of Chilonga to obtain a court interdict barring the government from evicting 12 000 villagers to pave the way for the Den Dairy project. Through Statutory Instrument 50 of 2021, the Government had given the Shangaan people of Chilonga 24 hours to permanently depart from their ancestral land or face arrest and possible imprisonment.



With USG assistance, and under the STACAP activity, CNRG deployed its team to support a minority community of the Shangaan people. Following CNRG's rapid response support and related training including supporting community organizing, we put together a legal challenge, the government then withdrew SI 50/2021 and temporarily put the project on hold. Three years later, the Chilonga community is



still settled on their ancestral land

As CNRG concludes its STACAP activities, it remains dedicated to empowering communities with the skills to navigate future challenges, amidst renewed efforts to commercialize the land, ensuring continued support for the affected communities.

Protecting Mutare's Ecological Heritage: CNRG's Victory Against Quarrying Threats

In November 2021, Mutare City Council entered into an agreement with Freestone Quarrying, a Chinese company, permitting quarrying activities on Dangamvura Mountain. Upon learning of this development from government officials in Manicaland, CNRG swiftly responded as Freestone had already commenced ground clearance and electricity infrastructure setup on site. The proposed quarrying in this ecologically fragile part of Mutare posed significant risks to public safety.



CNRG spearheaded a vigorous campaign, issuing two statements endorsed by over 40 CSOs and CBOs. Public meetings organized by CNRG and the United Mutare Residents and Ratepayers Association provided a platform for community engagement, where the Mayor of Mutare City Council presented the proposal and received public feedback. Additionally, CNRG initiated a court challenge in Mutare, underscoring concerns through Twitter spaces where

environmental experts highlighted the project's potential ecological, social, and environmental impacts.

Through various USG-supported initiatives, including legal action, CNRG's efforts bore fruit in February 2022 when Freestone withdrew from the quarry project. Acknowledging community and environmental concerns, Freestone also approached CNRG to request withdrawal of the court case following termination of their agreement with Mutare City Council.



Preserving Hwange: CNRG Leads Successful Campaign Against Mining in National Park

In 2020, the Zimbabwean government granted special mining grants to Afrochine and Zhongxin Coal Mining Group, allowing them to conduct coal exploration and mining activities within Hwange National Park. As the companies began setting up equipment, CNRG and other stakeholders launched a robust campaign to oppose the projects. Their arguments centered on the detrimental impacts these activities would have on tourism, exacerbating human-wildlife conflict by disrupting animal migration routes, and causing environmental pollution—threats documented in detail by CNRG with financial support from USAID/Zimbabwe's STACAP.



Operators and former Minister of Tourism, Walter Mzembi, strong support was voiced for terminating the mining licenses. This collective effort culminated in a significant decision by the Cabinet on October 8th, whereby the government announced a ban on all mining and related activities in ALL national parks and riverbanks.

Building on this success, CNRG continues to advocate for the ban to be enshrined in law through an amendment to the Wildlife and National Parks Act, currently underway in Parliament.

During one pivotal webinar organized by CNRG, attended by key figures including SafariOperators and former Minister of Tourism, Walter Mzembi, strong support was voiced for terminating the mining licenses. This collective effort culminated in a significant decision by the Cabinet on October 8th, whereby the government

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Hwange Coal Seam Fires: Research and Advocacy prompts government to take action.

In November 2021, CNRG published its groundbreaking research, 'Effects of Coal Seam Fires and other Environmental Hazards on Children in Hwange'. The report which mapped multiple sites where underground seam fires had contributed to injury or loss of life was widely circulated prompted Government, Hwange Colliery Company Limited (HCCL) leading to further investigation by DMT Group - a German consulting firm to further investigate the issues and recommendations raised by CNRG.



The research done with support from USAID was positively received by HCCL. Swiftly taking on board our recommendations to initiate a community awareness raising campaign that saw danger warning signs being put up on all identifiable seam fires and local arts group like Shangano performing edutainment plays in schools highlighting the risk of coal seam fires in Hwange.

This is another form of engagement CNRG has successfully done with support from USAID and in collaboration with key Government entities, Private sector and communities who live in resource rich areas such as Hwange.

CNRG Petition leading to Ministerial Action to halt Unsafe mining activities at Penhalonga

In July 2022 CNRG petitioned the Minister of Mines to address the deteriorating social, environmental and human rights situation at Redwing Mine in Penhalonga.

Reports received and processed by CNRG confirm a series of deaths of workers due to unsafe mining practices by his Better Brands Mining company.



The decision to close the mine came after a directive by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) after CNRG lobbied the Ministry of Mines to investigate while engaging EMA to enforce their oversight function on private mining companies who were abusing workers rights and breaking Zimbabwean law.

Centre for Natural Resources and Governance (CNRG) has always been exposing Better Brands Mining for allegedly defying EMA's directive to stop operations. This made possible with resources under the STACAP that strengthened the organisation's research and advocacy capacities.

CNRG even went on to petition the line Ministry over the issue. It threatened legal action. Accordingly, in a letter dated January 20, Better Brands announced that it would suspend operations at Redwing Mine, temporarily, until matters of increased number of fatalities, environmental degradation and constrained access controls are resolved.



Influencing Extractive Industries to perform CSR projects: **Nebandama Road Rehabilitation, Hwange**

In June 2020 CNRG received a complaint from the Nekabandama community in Hwange, raising concerns over pollution caused by haulage trucks owned by Zimbabwe Zhongxin Coking Company.

After deploying its rapid response mechanisms to investigate and build capacity of the community to better negotiate with private mining companies. CNRG supported the community to engaged a lawyer who wrote a letter of demand, asking the company to tarmac



the road to reduce dust pollution. The Chairman of the company, Liu Jianshen wrote CNRG with an undertaking to ensure that the 4km road was going to be resurfaced. A private company, Asphalt Products civil Engineering Contractors was contracted to carry out the job and this was successfully completed in September 2020. Another success as a result of financial and technical support from USAID in Zimbabwe.

Reducing Illicit Financial Flows: Government sets up inter-ministerial taskforce to audit Bikita Minerals following CNRG claims of looting of lithium – company ordered to shut down

On the 2nd of May CNRG visited Bikita Minerals and observed unethical practices such as tax evasion though lithium leaving the country undeclared. The observations were shared on twitter, attracting 138,000 views. The following week government set up an inter-ministerial taskforce to audit Bikita Minerals which found it to be non-compliant with the country's laws. On 15 May 2023 the Government of Zimbabwe temporarily shut down Bikita Minerals to



force it to comply with the country's regulations. Announcing the shutdown, Deputy Mines Minister Polite Kanambura said "The audit was done by an inter-ministerial team looking at issues like immigration, labor laws, export laws, environmental laws and so forth. Once the mine puts the house in order, its authorities will call us to re-inspect. If it's complying, we will issue a reopening order."

After the suspension was lifted, Bikita Minerals invited CNRG to tour the mine and to make recommendations on areas that need improvement. CNRG appreciates the support of USAID Zimbabwe in strengthening its capacity to promote accountability, rights and positive engagement with government and private sector stakeholders in Zimbabwe.

Using Commemorations to Build Power and Demand Justice for Widows of the 1972 Colliery Disaster

On 6 June 1972, 427 Hwange Colliery Company Limited employees perished following underground explosions. They left behind widows, the majority of whom have since died. Only 63 are still alive. They wallow in poverty as the welfare fund set up by the colonial administration is now dysfunctional. Under the STACAP activity, CNRG has been using the Kamandama Commemoration to demand justice for the widows and their families. Before the commemorations, HCCL used to invite the widows to Hwange for the 6 June commemorations where they only gave them bus fares and food hampers. However, following the CNRG intervention, the widows started receiving financial payments in USD, sometimes up to \$200. Though the payments are irregular and not substantial, the widows appreciate the efforts of CNRG in bringing their plight to the limelight which pushed the HCCL to start giving them financial payments after decades of neglect.

