

# The Weekly

A Weekly Newsletter by CNRG

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## Welcome Remarks

Welcome to the first edition of the CNRG Weekly for 2026.

We begin the year encouraged and energised by the opportunity to continue serving the people of Zimbabwe, defending our environment, our climate, and the rights of communities whose lives and livelihoods are increasingly under threat from unchecked extractivism.

*...Continued on page 2*



Farai Maguwu - Executive Director

## Key Highlights

Fiscal reforms should not be an end in themselves but a means to drive long-term economic resilience rather than short-term fixes. Answering these key questions will determine whether Zimbabwe's mineral wealth becomes a foundation for sustainable development, or another missed opportunity.

*.....Story on page 3*



Mozambique floods

## Spotlight on diamond governance

Governance gaps in taxation, revenue disclosure, environmental protection, and benefit-sharing persist, while communities bear the social and ecological costs of extraction. Zimbabwe's experience further illustrates how Kimberly Process certification without accountability fails to deliver justice or development.

*.....Story on page 3*

## Voices from the Community

Get a glimpse of unfiltered community voices from across Zimbabwe as people share their struggles, solutions, and experiences. In Penhalonga, community members make it clear that they do not want any form of mining other than underground mining.

The year 2025 ended on a high note for the Centre for Natural Resource Governance. Together with our allies, we led a determined campaign to halt mining activities at Christmas Pass, the iconic mountain range on the outskirts of Mutare.

Through sustained advocacy and high-level engagement, CNRG helped ensure that a company operated by local businessmen and Chinese nationals was forced to cease operations at the site. While this was an important victory, we remain clear-eyed: the struggle is far from over. Illegal mining continues—often under the cover of darkness—reminding us that vigilance and sustained pressure remain essential.

Across the country, CNRG continues to receive distress calls from communities raising alarm over mining activities that undermine livelihoods, threaten public health, and erode social cohesion. Displacements—and threats of displacement—are on the rise, while communal lands are being unilaterally seized by mining interests on a scale rarely witnessed in Zimbabwe's history. In response, 2026 will see CNRG intensify the Right2SayNo campaign nationwide, affirming the right of communities to resist projects that compromise their well-being, dignity, and future.

As Zimbabwe and the wider SADC region experience persistent wet spells, flooding in several areas has already claimed lives and destroyed infrastructure worth tens of billions of dollars. These events are a stark reminder that climate change is not an act of God—it is a man-made crisis directly linked to fossil fuel extraction and consumption.

We are deeply concerned that the Belém Communiqué failed to commit to a fossil fuel phase-out, reinforcing the reality that global leaders remain unwilling to abandon consumption patterns that deepen inequality and devastate those least responsible for the crisis.

CNRG joins growing calls for the full operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, alongside demands for transparency, accountability, and the decentralisation of climate finance to local authorities and civil society.

The year 2026 began with a staff planning retreat in Masvingo, where the CNRG team reflected on lessons from 2025 and mapped the road ahead with renewed clarity and purpose. We were also delighted to welcome Ms Cathrine Chimanda, our new Senior Programmes Officer, who brings over 15 years of experience in leadership and programme management within Zimbabwe's civic space.

Our team has hit the ground running—planning ambitious activities for the year while strengthening continental and global engagement. We recently participated in a Post-COP reflection meeting hosted by our partner, the Southern Africa Trust, in South Africa, and we are currently taking part in the Kimberley Process Civil Society Planning Meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

At the heart of this edition, *The Weekly* remains the lived experience of communities. Our Community Voices section from Penhalonga documents the everyday realities of dispossession, weak consultation, and fear of exclusion from decision-making. These voices remind us that mining conflicts are not abstract policy debates, but struggles over land, water, dignity, and survival.

We also amplify youth voices as young contributors warn that extractive governance is eroding identity, belonging, and hope for the next generation. As young people speak out on these injustices, our hope is in building a foundation of future human rights defenders.

The edition also situates mining within Southern Africa's escalating climate crisis, where devastating floods expose the deadly intersection of climate change, environmental degradation, and extractive expansion, making climate justice and preparedness urgent governance imperatives.

Together, the pieces in this edition pose a fundamental challenge: whether Zimbabwe's mineral wealth will be managed as a foundation for long-term resilience, justice, and development, or continue to reproduce inequality, environmental harm, and missed opportunities.

We invite you to engage with this issue critically, in solidarity with communities, and with a shared commitment to transforming natural resource governance beyond extraction.

We thank you for your continued solidarity and support as we journey through 2026, standing firm in defence of our common heritage, climate justice, and community rights.

In solidarity,

Farai Maguwu



## Mining Beyond Extraction: Turning Zimbabwe's Fiscal Reforms into Real Value

*By Staff Reporter*

Mining has always been more than an economic activity; it is a mirror of how societies balance national interest, community benefit, and global demand. For Zimbabwe, recent fiscal measures in the mining sector bring this tension sharply into focus.

The government, in its drive to raise revenue into its coffers, introduced a cocktail of fiscal reforms affecting the mining sector. Based on the 2026 National Budget presented by Zimbabwe's Minister of Finance, Economic Development, and Investment Promotion, effective January 1, 2026, a new 10% tax (Value Added Tax - VAT) was introduced on the export of unbeneficiated lithium ore.

The VAT will also affect other minerals like antimony and unbeneficiated chrome, alongside a revised tax on black granite. Further, a 3% Raw Minerals Levy on coal, lithium, black granite, quarry stone, and dimensional stone marks a clear policy signal: extractive growth without value addition is no longer sufficient.

From our perspective as the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG), these reforms echo long-standing continental commitments such as the Africa Mining Vision (AU, 2009), which calls for mineral resources to drive industrialisation, local value chains, and broad-based development rather than enclave extraction.

Similarly, the World Bank has noted that resource-rich countries that invest in beneficiation and local linkages are more likely to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.

Equally critical is the community dimension. As civil society actors have consistently highlighted, communities in mining areas often bear environmental and social costs while seeing limited benefits. If value addition is to mean anything, it must translate into local jobs, improved services, and meaningful participation in decision-making.

CNRG believes the central questions remain urgent on how Zimbabwe balances revenue generation with investor confidence and community benefit sharing. How are communities guaranteed tangible, visible benefits in the mining value chain through local content development?

Fiscal reforms should not be an end in themselves but a means to drive long-term economic resilience rather than short-term fixes. Answering these key questions will determine whether Zimbabwe's mineral wealth becomes a foundation for sustainable development, or another missed opportunity.

## When Cyanide Flows, Accountability Must Follow

*By Donald Nyarota*



The deaths of seven cattle at Mgagao Farm in Shamva on 17 January are not just an unfortunate accident caused by heavy rains. They are a stark reminder of how casually cyanide is handled in Zimbabwe's gold sector, and how weak oversight turns predictable risks into recurring disasters.

After a runoff suspected to contain cyanide overflowed from Tasik Mine and pooled along a public road, cattle drank from the contaminated water and died. For the affected farmers, this was not an abstract “environmental incident.” It was the loss of livelihoods, breeding stock, and years of investment. Compensation promises, while welcome, do not erase the damage or the fear that this could happen again.

What makes Shamva especially troubling is that it is not an isolated case. In recent weeks, similar incidents in Shamva and Bindura have pushed the death toll to 14 cattle.

This pattern points to a systemic problem: cyanide is widely used across Zimbabwe's goldfields, including by operations that lack adequate containment infrastructure, stormwater controls, and emergency response capacity. During the rainy season, poorly designed or poorly maintained tailings ponds and solution tanks become hazards waiting to spill.

EMA's response, sampling, containment, and neutralisation using hydrosulphate, is necessary. But it is also reactive. The real question is why communities must wait for animals to die before environmental management plans are enforced.

Barricades and cut-off trenches should not be improvised after contamination; they should be standard, inspected, and audited before mines are allowed to operate.

This monitoring and enforcement compliance is currently lacking in the mining sector.

Zimbabwe's mining laws recognise the polluter-pays principle, yet enforcement remains uneven. Too often, small-scale and medium-scale mines operate in regulatory grey zones, while farmers and communities bear the risks. The result is growing mistrust between miners and neighbours, and a landscape where economic activity undermines food security.

If mining and agriculture are to coexist, cyanide management must be treated as a public safety issue, not an internal operational detail. That means stricter licensing conditions, routine inspections, especially before and during the rainy season, transparent incident reporting, and swift, mandatory compensation when harm occurs.

Shamva's dead cattle should not become just another statistic. This should mark a turning point where Zimbabwe decides that the costs of gold cannot keep being paid by farmers, rivers, and communities downstream.



## Lessons from the KPCS Annual Planning Meeting for Zimbabwe

*By Donald Nyarota*

The Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition (KPCSC) Annual Planning Meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone, convened at a critical moment for diamond governance globally. Held under the theme “Sustainability for Greater Impact,” the meeting provided space for reflection on the future of the Kimberley Process (KP), the evolving political economy of mining, and the role of civil society as both watchdog and solution-builder in increasingly constrained civic spaces.

Mining remains central to Sierra Leone’s development trajectory, particularly diamonds, yet understanding recent shifts in the sector has become more complex. Discussions highlighted pressures arising from declining diamond revenues, changing global demand, and debates around sovereign wealth and long-term fiscal stability.

According to data shared during the meeting, KP Focal Point, Mohamed Bah, Director of Precious Minerals Trading at the National Minerals Agency (NMA), Sierra Leone’s diamond exports declined sharply, from approximately US\$102 million to US\$19 million, representing a reduction of over 300 percent in export value, placing significant strain on public finances. This volatility has reinforced calls to strengthen domestic value addition and rethink dependence on raw mineral exports.

Speakers such as Jaff Bamenjo, outgoing KP CSC coordinator, emphasized that the coalition’s strength lies in its independence and ability to set its own agenda, with support from partners such as the European Union.

Beyond diamonds, the coalition increasingly situates its work within broader mineral resource governance (MRG) debates, recognizing that the limitations of KP certification alone cannot address governance failures across extractive sectors. The inability of the KP to consistently prevent conflict diamonds from entering global markets underscores the urgency of reform.

The KP itself was described as at a crossroads. Ongoing disagreements at KP plenaries over the definition of “conflict diamonds” continue to undermine its credibility. Current definitions fail to adequately capture human rights abuses, governance-related violence, and state-linked militarization, allowing ambiguity to compromise accountability.

Participants argued for a universal definition that reflects contemporary realities, where harm is not limited to armed rebel movements but often embedded in state-corporate arrangements.

At the same time, the meeting situated diamonds within a rapidly changing global mining landscape. The rising importance of critical minerals, coupled with intensifying geopolitical contestations, is reshaping extractive priorities across Africa. This shift is occurring alongside a shrinking civic space and the rise of authoritarian governance, placing civil society under pressure while increasing the stakes of resource governance failures.

Bah reaffirmed Sierra Leone's commitment to responsible mining practices, including reforms under the Mines and Minerals Act of 2023, which strengthen community consultation requirements. However, persistent challenges remain at the community level, particularly around artisanal mining, environmental degradation, taxation, and revenue sharing, where affected communities continue to receive limited benefits from extraction.

These dynamics carry important lessons for Zimbabwe. Like Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe faces declining returns from diamonds, weak transparency, and unresolved community grievances, particularly in Marange. Massive retrenchments by the state-owned mining company Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC), which reportedly laid off over 500 workers in 2025, are indicative of the sector in turmoil.

Governance gaps in taxation, revenue disclosure, environmental protection, and benefit-sharing persist, while communities bear the social and ecological costs of extraction. Zimbabwe's experience further illustrates how certification without accountability fails to deliver justice or development.

For Zimbabwean civil society and policymakers, the discussions in Freetown underscore the need to reaffirm the core objective of the KP: preventing the trade in conflict diamonds, while pushing for enhanced traceability systems that incorporate human rights and community evidence. They also point to the importance of exploring responsible investment and value addition strategies to buffer against market volatility and production shocks.

Ultimately, sustainability for greater impact will depend on whether the KP CSC and its partners can reposition diamond governance away from narrow compliance toward people-centered accountability, while remaining alert to the broader extractive transitions shaping Africa's future.

For Zimbabwe, as for Sierra Leone, the path forward lies not only in reforming the KP, but in ensuring that mining serves communities, strengthens fiscal stability, and contributes meaningfully to long-term development.

## Digging for Minerals, Burying Our Future

*By Passionate Fuza*

In recent years, natural resources governance in Zimbabwe has consistently failed to provide young people with dignified and secure livelihoods. Young people are repeatedly told they are the future stewards of the nation, yet that future increasingly feels like it has no destination for them. The promise of tomorrow exists, but the space to belong within it is steadily being erased.

Mining in Zimbabwe has come to override basic human rights, land rights, security of inheritance, human dignity, identity, and culture. Young people are left bearing the greatest burden, questioning what it truly means to belong and, ultimately, to whom Zimbabwe really belongs.

This crisis began to take shape with the launch of the Look East Policy in 2003 and was further entrenched by the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" policy in 2017. Since then, harsh and often unimaginable realities have continued to unfold.

One visible outcome has been the influx of Chinese mining interests into mineral-rich communities—welcome investors bringing much-needed foreign direct investment. However, this investment has led to families being displaced from their ancestral land without fair compensation. Graves are exhumed without due process or dignity. In Zimbabwean

culture, land is not just property; it is origin, spirituality, lineage, and legitimacy.

When these are stripped away, what becomes of a young person whose identity is rooted in them?

Places that were once home for generations have lost their meaning. Young people in mining communities now live with fear, trauma, and the anxiety of temporality, never knowing when they will be forced to leave. This instability disrupts access to education, clean water, health services, and even clean air. The sense of belonging that anchors a young person's life is steadily dismantled.

We are told development is necessary, that Zimbabwe must grow and become an upper-middle-income economy, leaving no one behind. Yet we ask: who is benefiting? Young people and their families are paying a cost that can never be recovered. While the environment may one day heal, the loss of identity, dignity, and belonging cannot.

Mining has compounded unemployment and exploitation. Workplaces resemble modern slave zones. Young women suffer most from long walks to fetch water, abuse, to reproductive illnesses caused by mercury and cyanide pollution. Young men face the collapse of inheritance systems as land and livestock disappear. Hope is steadily eroded.

Our plea as young people is simple: we want a government that protects its people first. We want our identity and dignity preserved. Mining must be responsible, just, and community centered. Zimbabwe's future lies in its young people, if nurtured by leadership that values people over profit.

## Community Voices

*From the Penhalonga community*

On 17 January 2026, Betterbrands Mining Company invaded a mountain where mountain agriculture is practiced in an area called Tsvingwe, Penhalonga. The mountain contains water tanks used for irrigation by community members who cultivate fields there.

When Betterbrands arrived, they spoke to one of the women who has an agricultural plot on the mountain, Mrs Kabvasiko. The company informed her that she must stop farming in that area and was instructed to notify everyone else who has fields on the mountain to do the same. The reason given was that the company intended to construct a road on the mountain for gold mining purposes by Chinese miners.

Betterbrands promised that people whose crops would be destroyed would be compensated.

On 18 January 2026, the company returned with Chinese nationals, parading around the mountain. Community members who were present approached both the company and the Chinese representatives to inquire about what was happening. They were instructed to write down their names, national ID numbers, and cellphone numbers so that the company could shortlist people with experience in the fields on the mountains. The community members also recorded an estimate of the produce they expected to harvest from their fields.

On 19 January 2026, Florence Mapfumo received direct contact from a Mr Chinamhora from Betterbrands. She initially missed his call, but he later called back on Monday at around 15:54. During the conversation, Florence explained that she was one of the people in the field on the mountain. Mr Chinamhora confirmed that the Chinese were indeed coming to mine and also stated that the process would take time and advised her to ensure that her name was recorded, as not all fields would be affected by the mining operations.

Betterbrands had earlier communicated that they would hold a community meeting on 19 January 2026, but they did not show up. This prompted

Florence Mapfumo to make a follow-up call on the same day. Mr. Chinamhora then stated that the meeting was supposed to have taken place the previous day, which confused the community.

Despite this, on 19 January 2026, the community held its own meeting regarding the issue. During this meeting, the community agreed on a social contract stating that if mining were to take place, it should be underground mining, as had been done previously in the community. The community made it clear that they do not want any form of mining other than underground mining, and if this condition is not met, they do not want the Chinese to mine in their area.

The community shared several reasons for this position, including the high risk of land degradation, cracking of houses due to explosions, noise and air pollution, health risks, and possible displacement. The community also expressed the view that the Chinese should mine in their own country.

The community fears that those members who already provided their personal details may later be said to have validated an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), as the company now has their full credentials.

This article was shared by a community member from Penhalonga with minor editorial input from CNRG

## Southern Africa's Flood Crisis: A Call for Climate Justice, Early Warning Systems, and Regional Disaster Preparedness

*By Tanaka Ndongera*

Southern Africa is once again underwater. Torrential rains in January displaced tens of thousands in Mozambique, forced rescues and road closures in South Africa's Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, and prompted Zimbabwe to declare emergency measures in several districts. Forecasts from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts suggest the crisis may yet widen, with Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Eswatini and Angola all at risk of flooding.

This is no freak season. Flood disasters have grown more frequent and more destructive across the region over the past decade. Malawi, Zimbabwe, and South Africa have been among the worst affected.

In 2025 alone, floods killed at least 36 people in Malawi. Mozambique offers the starkest comparison: Cyclone Idai in 2019 affected 1.8 million people, but subsequent storms, Ana and Gombe in 2023, displaced hundreds of thousands more.

Satellite mapping that year recorded 1.4 million hectares inundated, with some 820,000 people living in flood-prone zones. By 2024, record rainfall across Africa's tropical belt had affected 11 million people and displaced 4 million, pushing Southern Africa's flood seasons well beyond historical norms.

Climate change is the principal accelerant. Warmer oceans and shifting climate patterns such as La Niña are intensifying rainfall and prolonging wet seasons. Since mid-December 2025, intense downpours have affected roughly 1.3 million people across southern Africa, destroying homes and infrastructure, cutting access to health services, and raising the risk of water- and mosquito-borne diseases.

The economic and environmental toll is mounting. In South Africa, floods have inflicted damage worth tens of millions of dollars on Kruger National Park, one of Africa's premier wildlife reserves. Roads and bridges have been washed away, tourist facilities destroyed, and large sections rendered inaccessible. Recovery, officials admit, will take years. Zimbabwe has reported nearly 80 deaths, with collapsed bridges and damaged schools isolating villages and delaying food and medical aid. South Africa has declared a national disaster.

Regional institutions are scrambling to respond. The Southern African Development Community has deployed its Emergency Response Team to Mozambique and South Africa to support national authorities, coordinate assessments, and consolidate a regional humanitarian appeal. Such interventions are necessary, but insufficient.

The floods underline a harsher truth: climate change is no longer a future risk but a present crisis. Southern Africa remains trapped in a reactive cycle, counting casualties, repairing damage, and appealing for aid. Breaking it will require sustained investment in early-warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and disaster-risk management, backed by stronger regional coordination.

Climate justice is central. The poorest communities, least responsible for global emissions, suffer the gravest losses. Unless promised climate finance begins to flow, the region will face the same choice after every rainy season: invest in resilience now, or continue rebuilding after the waters recede.



Floods hit Mozambique killing at least 36 people



Over 600 k affected in Gaza, Maputo, and Sofala provinces.



Saved by the boat, community members transported to safety

**Pictures by Shorai Murwira**