

The Weekly

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Lithium extraction at Bikita Minerals, powering Zimbabwe's boom as one of the country's largest and strategic producers in the global energy transition.

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Advancing Child Rights in Zimbabwe's Mining Communities

Mining is central to Zimbabwe's economic strategy. It generates revenue, foreign currency and employment. Yet in many mining-affected communities, children bear invisible costs that rarely appear in production statistics or export figures. If mining is to drive sustainable development, it must also advance child rights.

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The FACE of Ecofeminism in Hwange

Learn how the Centre for Natural Resource Governance is empowering young women in Hwange to lead climate justice efforts and demand accountability in environmental governance.

Lithium ban jolts markets, testing Zim's industrial ambitions

By Donald Nyarota

When a government wants to climb the value chain it usually does so in measured steps. Zimbabwe chose a different route.

On Wednesday 25 February 2026, Minister of Mines and Minerals Development Dr Polite Kambamur abruptly banned exports of raw minerals and lithium concentrates, including consignments already in transit, to force more processing at home.

The measure has immediate local consequences and an equally immediate market effect, pushing traders to reprice a metal that sits at the heart of the electric-vehicle revolution.

The economics are simple, and harsh. Zimbabwe exported about 1.128 million tonnes of spodumene concentrate in 2025, up from roughly 1.014 million tonnes in 2024; most of it went to Chinese refiners. That extra volume did little for revenue because prices had been weak for much of 2025.

The new ban, initially intended for 2027, therefore removes a sizeable tranche of feedstock from global flows at a time when demand for battery metals is regaining momentum.

Markets reacted fast. On 26 February the most-traded lithium carbonate contract on the Guangzhou Futures Exchange jumped to about 178,020 yuan/tonne after the announcement, a sharp move from the troughs of 2025 and a symptom of how quickly policy shocks can map into price volatility.

Zimbabwe's policy aim is defensible: beneficiation and local industrialisation are sensible goals for a country with rich mineral endowments. But beneficiation is not simply a tariff or a ban; it is an industrial strategy.

Turning spodumene into battery-grade chemicals, precursors or finished cells requires reliable power, industrial water, specialist plants, engineers and, crucially, patient capital.

Abrupt export controls risk converting a potential competitive advantage into a short-term shock that dents investor confidence and imperils jobs.

That is precisely the warning raised by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) in its press statement, which calls for a phased transition, stakeholder dialogue and legal certainty.



**Minister of Mines and Minerals Development
Dr Polite Kambamura**

There is a wider lesson for critical-minerals policy. Resource nationalism is in vogue, from restrictions on nickel in Indonesia to tighter controls on copper and lithium elsewhere, but success depends on sequencing.

Some countries have built downstream capacity by pairing phased restrictions with investment incentives, infrastructure commitments and legally-anchored roadmaps. Those that have not often end up exporting political heat rather than industrial capability.

Zimbabwe's ban will be judged not merely by the immediate price blip but by its ability to translate rhetoric into refineries, skilled jobs and stable contracts.

For markets the near term is clear: less visible feedstock typically means higher short-run volatility until buyers find alternatives or until processing capacity is added elsewhere. For Zimbabwe, success will turn on the hard work behind the headlines, grid and water investments, fiscal packages to attract refiners, workforce development and phased milestones that allow firms to honour existing agreements rather than litigate them.

CNRG's prescription, a transition window, stakeholder platform, time-bound targets and independent impact assessments, is a practical checklist for turning a policy shock into sustainable industrial change.

Zimbabwe's Energy Poverty Paradox in the Age of Lithium



A traditional thatched homestead in Masvingo West Province, powered by the sun — where heritage meets clean energy and rural resilience shines.

In the dry season, when the Kariba waters recede and hydropower output falls, whole neighborhoods in Harare and Bulawayo slip into darkness. Zimbabwe, a country endowed with some of Africa's most strategic minerals for the global energy transition, remains trapped in an energy poverty paradox: rich beneath the soil, poor at the socket.

According to the World Bank, access to electricity in Zimbabwe has improved over the past decade, yet reliability remains deeply uneven. Urban households endure hours of load shedding; rural communities often remain off grid altogether. Businesses run on diesel generators, driving up costs in an already fragile economy.

The irony is stark. Zimbabwe sits on Africa's largest lithium reserves and is a significant producer of platinum group metals, chrome and nickel, all essential to renewable energy technologies. Lithium from districts like Goromonzi and Bikita feeds global demand for batteries used in electric vehicles and grid storage. Platinum, abundant in the Great Dyke, is critical for hydrogen fuel cells. Nickel and chrome underpin battery chemistry and stainless-steel infrastructure needed for wind and solar installations.

The global energy transition has pushed lithium prices through volatile booms and corrections, but the long-term demand curve remains upward. Yet Zimbabwe exports much of its lithium as concentrate, capturing limited value. The country initially banned the export of raw lithium in 2022 to encourage local processing, an important first step.

In 2025 the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development further announced a similar ban to take effect in 2027. Now the Ministry has halted all export even trucks in transit were stopped.

The question is whether that policy can evolve into a broader industrial strategy linking minerals to domestic energy security.

Renewable energy potential is considerable. Zimbabwe has high solar irradiation levels, making distributed solar a logical pathway for rural electrification. Mini-grids and rooftop systems could reduce dependence on aging coal plants in Hwange and vulnerable hydropower from Kariba. But financing, grid constraints and policy inconsistency have slowed momentum.

To break the paradox, Zimbabwe could leverage its mineral wealth in three ways: first, by deepening local beneficiation to capture more revenue; second, by channeling mineral royalties into a dedicated renewable energy and rural electrification fund; and third, by negotiating community-centered benefit-sharing agreements that tie mining licenses to local energy access.

Energy poverty is not merely a technical problem. It is a governance question. If Zimbabwe can convert its critical minerals into public investment, lighting schools, powering clinics, supporting small enterprises, it may yet transform extraction into empowerment.



Advancing Child Rights in Zimbabwe's Mining Communities

By Kudzanai Chimombe

Mining is central to Zimbabwe's economic strategy. It generates revenue, foreign currency and employment. Yet in many mining-affected communities, children bear invisible costs that rarely appear in production statistics or export figures. If mining is to drive sustainable development, it must also advance child rights.

Section 81 of Zimbabwe's Constitution guarantees every child the right to education, health, nutrition and protection, and affirms that the best interests of the child are paramount in every matter concerning them. The Children's Amendment Act (2023) reinforces that safeguarding children strengthens families and communities. These are not symbolic commitments. They impose duties on government, companies and communities to ensure mining does not undermine children's rights.

The UNICEF Child Rights and Mining Toolkit (2017) offers practical guidance for applying a child-rights lens to extractive activities. Its central message is clear: children are not passive extensions of adults. They are distinct rights-holders with specific vulnerabilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Zimbabwe's mining communities, those vulnerabilities are acute.

Children face risks linked to displacement and resettlement, in-migration of job seekers, environmental pollution, school dropouts driven by gold rush pressures, child labour in artisanal mining, and heightened exposure to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence.

Without child-specific data, these harms remain hidden. Government and companies must therefore invest in baseline studies disaggregated by age and gender, including vulnerable groups such as orphans, child-headed households and children in informal settlements.

Companies should partner with child-focused organisations to facilitate safe, voluntary youth-only consultations and integrate findings into operational decisions. Youth engagement strengthens social licence and builds long-term trust.

Resettlement planning must be child-sensitive. Relocations disrupt schooling, food systems, health access and informal care networks. Compensation frameworks should recognise children's dependence on land-based livelihoods, even where they are not landowners. New settlements must guarantee uninterrupted access to schools, clinics and safe play spaces.

Environmental protection is a child rights issue. Children are physiologically more vulnerable to mercury exposure, contaminated water and airborne dust. In gold-mining regions, child exposure to mercury is a serious concern. Companies must conduct child-focused environmental risk assessments, monitor water quality transparently and protect community water points.

Child safeguarding is non-negotiable. Mining booms often intensify transactional sex, labour exploitation and abuse. Companies must enforce strict codes of conduct, monitor supply chains, support community-based child protection systems and invest in strengthening local service delivery.

Children in Zimbabwe's mining communities are among the least consulted yet most affected stakeholders. Mining will shape Zimbabwe's future.

The choice is whether it entrenches inequality or becomes a vehicle for child protection, dignity and opportunity. Advancing child rights is not charity. It is a constitutional obligation and a test of responsible resource governance.

Empowering Young Women for Climate Justice in Hwange



By Passionate Fuza

Climate change continues to pose serious challenges to communities in Zimbabwe, with women and youth bearing the greatest burden despite contributing least to its causes.

In response, the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) hosted a Youth Eco-Feminism and Environmental Advocacy Training in Hwange to strengthen young people's capacity to engage in climate justice and environmental governance.

The training created a safe platform for them to connect these environmental harms to broader questions of energy justice, economic alternatives, and intergenerational equity.

By unpacking the links between fossil fuels, carbon emissions, and global climate commitments, participants were encouraged to envision a just transition—one that does not sacrifice community wellbeing for short-term profit but prioritizes sustainable livelihoods, clean energy access, and community ownership of natural resources.

A strong emphasis was placed on leadership development and collective organising. Young women were supported to see themselves not merely as beneficiaries of climate action, but as decision-makers, watchdogs, and movement builders. Through group exercises and scenario-based learning, they developed practical strategies for engaging local authorities, traditional leaders, and...

...mining companies on issues such as water access, rehabilitation of degraded land, and corporate accountability.

The training reinforced the importance of solidarity across youth groups, women's networks, and community-based organisations in Hwange, strengthening the foundation for sustained, grassroots-driven climate advocacy.

Ultimately, the Youth Eco-Feminism and Environmental Advocacy Training was not just a knowledge-sharing platform—it was a catalyst for agency. By equipping young women with legal literacy, advocacy tools, and digital communication skills, CNRG helped nurture a new generation of climate justice champions ready to challenge inequities and shape environmental governance processes.

As climate impacts intensify across Zimbabwe, investing in the leadership of young women in frontline communities like Hwange is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for building resilient, inclusive, and climate-just futures.

This training also introduced digital storytelling as a tool for advocacy. Participants learned how to use social media platforms to document environmental challenges, share community stories, and amplify calls for justice using visual content and strategic hashtags such as #PeopleOverProfit. #WhatWomenFACE



Just and Fair Share Campaign Launched in Hwange

By Tanaka Ndongera

The coal-rich district of Hwange has long been the engine of Zimbabwe's energy economy yet its communities have watched the wealth extracted from beneath their feet flow outward, leaving behind contaminated water, displaced families, and broken promises.

That silence ended in February 2026, when the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) officially launched the Just and Fair Share Campaign in Hwange, igniting what is set to become a nationwide movement for resource justice.

Under the rallying theme "Our Resources. Our Rights. Our Future." the Hwange launch brought together community members, youth activists, civil society organisations, and local leaders united by a single demand: that mining-affected communities receive a just and fair share of the revenues generated from their land.

Participants pledged to assert their constitutional rights, demand transparency in mining contracts, negotiate Community Benefit Agreements, protect the environment, and amplify the voices of women, youth, and the most vulnerable.

The campaign, supported by the Open Society Foundations, is not merely a two-day event it is a sustained, community-led movement. At its core is the recognition that communities are not passive bystanders in the extraction of their resources, but active, informed, and powerful stakeholders who must have a seat at every table where decisions are made.

Participants were equipped with practical tools for community-led monitoring, revenue tracking, and evidence-based advocacy skills that transform grievance into agency.

"I am not a lawyer, but I am the one whose land they mine without consent," captures the spirit of the campaign one that refuses to accept the status quo.

Youth voices were central to the Hwange launch, reflecting CNRG's deliberate strategy to invest in the generation that will live longest with the consequences of today's extraction decisions.

With Hwange serving as a living laboratory generating evidence, building a replicable model, and inspiring momentum the campaign now turns its eyes east.

The next stop is Mutare, a district shaped by diamond and gold mining, where communities face their own legacy of displacement, environmental damage, and exclusion from benefit sharing. The lessons from Hwange will travel with the campaign: that knowledge is power, that collective action works, and that a community that speaks with one voice cannot be ignored.

As CNRG takes the Just and Fair Share Campaign to Mutare, the message is clear: this is not a Hwange story alone. It is Zimbabwe's story and it is only just beginning.

Relocation Without Effective Remedy: Why Culture Matters

By Belinda Chinowawa

When the people of Chiadzwa were forcibly evicted to make way for diamond mining, they were promised homes and land that would match or improve what they had before. What they found instead was a life of hardship, broken promises, and the loss of the community structures that had sustained them for generations.

In Chiadzwa, many families belonged to the apostolic sect and lived in large, polygamous compounds. A single homestead could include several houses for the different wives and children, and farmland fed the household. These compounds reflected a cultural way of life where extended families lived together, shared responsibilities, and upheld traditions. The homes carried dignity, identity, and belonging.

At Arda Transau, this identity was shredded. Families were jammed into rigid, one-size-fits-all houses that ignored the realities of polygamous arrangements. Agricultural land was either insufficient or unsuitable for sustaining previous livelihoods. Over time, as housing conditions have deteriorated and incomes have vanished, formerly cohesive communities have been left to fragment under the crushing weight of economic strain.

This is not simply a housing deficit. It is a remedy deficit. A few houses cannot replace the social fabric of communal living, more so when they are not designed with the complexities of the communities in mind. International and regional human rights standards are clear. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights protects the right to culture and family life. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees the right to adequate housing, food, and education. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples insists that communities must not be uprooted without their free, prior, and informed consent.

A culturally appropriate remedy would have respected these standards. It would have ensured housing that reflected polygamous and extended family structures. Agricultural land would have been of size necessary to sustain livelihoods.

The relocation process would have been designed through genuine consultation, listening to what families said they needed to preserve their way of life. It would also have included measures to restore dignity, such as compensation for lost income and recognition of cultural practices.

Without these elements, relocation becomes dispossession dressed as development. True remedy must rebuild both the material and cultural foundations of life, so that families can live with dignity, identity, and belonging.

To ensure sustainable development, mining companies must transition toward resettlement models that protect communal identity supported by the codification of these holistic protections into domestic law.

Poetry Corner

By Annette Mumba

Who is leading
They told stories of action
Did they know, probably the oppression, suffocation
And suppression that the community faced
For there was no satisfaction

The initiatives we dreamed of, maybe never heard of
Protection correction, a stand against the silent oppression
They spoke of rights, a fair share they said as though without any
fright

The language sounded so foreign
Or maybe the voice of empowerment was just so sovereign
Rights, acts, laws and policies of the constitution
A system of governance
A rule for the people by the people with the people
But which people when the masses stand unempowered

See the pollution from the mines has had a crowded mentality on
the people
And imprinted ideology
For you cannot eat a pie when you don't know you have it

The earth bleeds
Mentality sealed but today freed
but still trapped in system of enticing greed
Still foreign in our own originality

Tell me
How many can stand to question the oppression manifesting as
negation
How many sons and daughters of the soil have a share of our God
given riches

A fair and just share they said
Hope and foundation laid
Is it just a poet's wish for fruits of this act to manifest