

The Weekly

A Weekly Newsletter by CNRG

Issue 17

29 May 2026



Beautiful from afar but far from beauty: The condemned houses built by DISCO to relocate Manhize villagers

Assault of Workers at Zambezi Gas in Hwange- Page 5

Inside the Human Cost of the Manhize Steel Dream

The official story surrounding the sprawling industrial expansion at Dinson Iron and Steel Company (DISCO) in Manhize is one of progress. Government-aligned newspapers celebrate it as Zimbabwe's industrial rebirth. Television crews' film gleaming machinery, Chinese executives in hard hats and politicians praising "Vision 2030." Public relations documentaries are commissioned to portray prosperity.

...Continued on page 3



Zimbabwe's Critical Minerals Policy: Grand Ambition Built on a Crumbling Legal Foundation

As the global economy races toward electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, and strategic mineral security, Harare is responding not with deep structural reform, but with policy declarations layered onto an exhausted and outdated legal framework.

Zimbabwe's Critical Minerals Policy: Grand Ambition Built on a Crumbling Legal Foundation

Zimbabwe is attempting to govern a 21st-century mineral boom with a mining law inherited from the colonial era. As the global economy races toward electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, and strategic mineral security, Harare is responding not with deep structural reform, but with policy declarations layered onto an exhausted and outdated legal framework.

In its latest press statement, the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development justified the declaration of “Critical,” “Special Critical,” and “Strategic” minerals on the basis of “increasing global demand for critical minerals to underpin the Energy Transition Drive and need for the country to strategically plan on its mineral resources.” The Ministry further argued that these are “minerals whose supply chains are highly vulnerable to disruption,” minerals “on high international demand where Zimbabwe holds significant reserves,” and minerals capable of generating “substantial direct and indirect local employment and national economic benefits.”

The language is compelling. It reflects a Government eager to project itself as a strategic player in the global energy transition economy. It speaks to beneficiation, industrialisation, employment creation, and resource sovereignty. Yet behind the rhetoric lies a more uncomfortable reality: Zimbabwe is trying to build a strategic minerals regime through executive declarations while the long-promised reform of the Mines and Minerals Act remains trapped in legislative limbo.

For nearly two decades, Government has promised comprehensive mining sector reform. Draft Bills have circulated endlessly through Parliament. Consultations have been held. Technical committees have deliberated. Yet the country remains governed by a mining law crafted in 1961, long before battery minerals, green industrialisation, supply chain security, and modern environmental governance became central to global mining politics.

This reform paralysis is no longer merely administrative delay. It has become a governance crisis.

The latest declaration exposes a dangerous contradiction at the heart of Zimbabwe's resource governance model: enormous economic ambition resting on weak institutions, unfinished laws, and expanding ministerial discretion. At a time when countries are strengthening legal frameworks to regulate critical minerals transparently and competitively, Zimbabwe is increasingly governing strategic resources through policy pronouncements rather than enforceable legislation.



Solar Pannels are increasingly popular in rural Zimbabwe as challenges to energy access bite

That contradiction becomes immediately visible in the declaration itself.

The Ministry has now introduced three categories, “Critical,” “Special Critical,” and “Strategic” minerals, yet nowhere in Zimbabwean law are these categories properly defined. Instead, the classifications are based on broad policy criteria and executive discretion. The declaration states that minerals may be classified according to supply chain vulnerability, economic value, beneficiation potential, rarity, and employment generation. But these remain political and administrative criteria rather than legally binding statutory definitions.

The confusion deepens when compared to the current Mines and Minerals Bill before Parliament. The Bill only recognises “strategic minerals,” defining them broadly as minerals important to Zimbabwe's economic, industrial, or security interests. Crucially, the Bill currently identifies only diamonds as strategic minerals. The Ministry's new declaration, however, abruptly expands the category to include gold, coal, iron ore, oil and gas, limestone, potash, pyrites, and phosphorus, while simultaneously creating entirely new classifications absent from the draft legislation.

The result is legal incoherence.

Zimbabwe now risks operating parallel governance systems: one embedded in unfinished legislation and another driven through executive decree. Investors, regulators, communities, and even Government institutions are left navigating overlapping frameworks where mineral categories can shift through ministerial authority rather than parliamentary oversight.

This uncertainty is compounded by the declaration's aggressive expansion of ministerial power. *(Continued on page 7)*

Blood, Dust and Broken Promises: Inside the Human Cost of the Manhize Steel Dream



By Donald Nyarota

The official story surrounding the massive industrial expansion at Dinson Iron and Steel Company (DISCO) in Manhize is one of progress and national revival. State-aligned media celebrate it as the cornerstone of Zimbabwe's industrial rebirth, complete with images of gleaming machinery, Chinese executives in hard hats and politicians praising "Vision 2030."

But beyond the carefully managed tours and promotional documentaries lies another reality, one marked by displacement, broken homes, dry boreholes and deepening poverty among communities living in the shadow of Zimbabwe's biggest steel project.

Interviews with community members and sources familiar with operations around the mine and industrial park reveal a growing humanitarian crisis that authorities appear unwilling, or unable, to confront.

At the centre of the controversy is the Chinese-backed steel operation linked to the Manhize industrial development corridor, a flagship project expected to produce 600,000 tonnes of steel annually. Yet for families displaced by the expansion, industrialisation has come at a devastating social cost.

The first casualties were 17 families relocated to make way for the industrial park. As settlers on state land without title deeds, they entered compensation negotiations from a position of extreme vulnerability. According to community sources, compensation focused narrowly on physical "developments" such as huts, fruit trees and small structures, while land carried no recognised value

"They counted the trees and structures," one source said. "But how do you value a life built over generations, what about our families."

The families were relocated about seven kilometres away to what residents describe as an isolated gravel settlement with poor infrastructure and little reliable water supply. Six boreholes reportedly drilled by the company turned into dry holes.

"No water. Nothing for the community to live on," said one source familiar with the relocation process. "People were simply abandoned there."

Residents say food insecurity is worsening while livelihoods tied to farming have collapsed. Some families reportedly survive on irregular subsistence payments of about US\$200 every other month, payments that at one stage allegedly stopped for more than five months before villagers protested.

The relocation houses themselves are emerging as another source of controversy. Community members say homes built for displaced families began developing cracks soon after occupation.

While the houses appear modern externally, residents allege serious internal structural defects.

"The houses look beautiful for cameras," one villager said. "Inside, the walls are splitting, we are yet to removed despite them finishing the houses."

Sources say government inspectors reportedly condemned some of the houses and ordered replacements, though some contractors allegedly abandoned construction work midway.

The crisis is particularly severe for elderly residents from Mushenjere village, many reportedly in their 80s and 90s, whose farming land was swallowed by mining expansion and fenced behind industrial security barriers.

"They took the fields and left the people outside the Durawall," a source said.

A limestone crusher now reportedly operates near residential areas, exposing families to dust pollution and possible respiratory risks. Yet only three families from the Mushenjere relocation programme have reportedly been moved so far, and even those houses are said to have developed structural defects. *(To p7)*

Hwange Communities Unite Against Gender-Based Violence



The Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) recently held a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Advocacy Campaign and Outreach Meeting in Hwange, bringing together women, community members, and key stakeholders to discuss the growing impact of violence against women and girls in mining communities.

The meeting attracted 40 participants, with women and girls making up about 95% of attendees. Representatives from Hwange Rural District Council (RDC), Hwange Colliery Company, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks), the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) of the Zimbabwe Republic Police, community leaders, and young people also attended the workshop.

Opening the meeting, CNRG programs officer Passionate Fuza highlighted the importance of protecting women and girls in communities affected by mining and environmental challenges.

She explained that the workshop aimed to raise awareness on Gender-Based Violence, strengthen knowledge on women's rights and legal protections, and create dialogue on how mining and environmental degradation increase the risks faced by women and girls.

CNRG also shared information on its work in promoting natural resource governance, environmental justice, community rights, and gender inclusion.

Discussions during the meeting showed how women in mining communities often face increased burdens such as travelling long distances to fetch water and firewood due to environmental destruction caused by mining activities.

These challenges expose women and girls to violence, harassment, and unsafe conditions.

A presentation by the Victim Friendly Unit educated participants on GBV reporting procedures, legal protections, and support services available for survivors. Community members openly shared concerns about some challenges survivors face when reporting cases, including delays and negative attitudes from some service providers. The open discussions created an important platform for engagement between communities and duty bearers.

ZimParks also spoke about the link between environmental degradation, wildlife conflict, and the safety of women and girls living near conservation areas. Participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss these issues directly with stakeholders.

One of the most emotional moments of the workshop was a poem performance by a young woman from Shangano Arts Trust. The poem captured the pain and struggles faced by women and girls while calling for unity and action against violence.

As a sign of commitment, participants signed an anti-GBV pledge, publicly committing themselves to protecting women and girls and supporting survivors of violence. The campaign ended with solidarity activities, singing, and a renewed sense of hope and collective responsibility within the community.

The outreach meeting strengthened awareness, community participation, and stakeholder collaboration in the fight against Gender-Based Violence in Hwange.

ZDAMWU, CNRG Condemn Alleged Assault of Workers at Zambezi Gas in Hwange

By Staff Reporter

The Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Minerals Workers Union (ZDAMWU), together with the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG), has strongly condemned the alleged brutal assault of workers at Zambezi Gas Zimbabwe (Pvt) Ltd in Hwange by suspected state security agents.

According to reports received by the organisations, several workers were physically assaulted on the night of 27 May 2026 after company management allegedly accused them of siphoning diesel from machinery at the coal mining and coalbed methane exploration company. The organisations allege that instead of following lawful procedures and reporting the matter to the Zimbabwe Republic Police, management reportedly summoned state security agents who violently attacked workers.

At least two security guards reportedly sustained serious injuries during the assault, while several drivers were also beaten. The incident has raised fresh concerns over labour rights violations and the treatment of workers within the extractive sector.

ZDAMWU General Secretary Justice Chinhema said the incident reflects a growing culture of fear and intimidation against workers.

“Workers are not slaves and should never be subjected to violence, torture, or degrading treatment under any circumstances. Any allegations of misconduct must be handled through lawful labour and legal procedures that respect human rights and the dignity of workers,” said Chinhema.

“As ZDAMWU, we take these allegations seriously. Any reports of poor working and living conditions, unsafe treatment, discrimination, or degrading treatment of workers must never be ignored. We shall engage Zambezi Gas management with a view to ensuring that the issues raised are investigated and addressed urgently.”

The organisations further expressed concern over allegations of poor working and living conditions at the company. Workers reportedly cited inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of access to clean drinking water, poor occupational safety standards, and insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE).



ZDAMWU general secretary Mr Justice Chinhema

There are also allegations that lower-grade workers are being denied decent accommodation and hygienic facilities while senior employees enjoy better living conditions. ZDAMWU and CNRG said such practices raise serious concerns about labour exploitation and workplace discrimination.

Chinhema also called on authorities to urgently investigate the matter and ensure accountability.

“No corporate entity should be allowed to operate above the law or violate the safety and dignity of workers. We are calling for an independent investigation, immediate medical support for injured workers, and an end to intimidation and violence against employees,” he said.

ZDAMWU and CNRG urged the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the National Social Security Authority (NSSA), the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, and relevant parliamentary committees to intervene and investigate conditions at Zambezi Gas Zimbabwe.

The organisations reaffirmed their commitment to defending workers’ rights and promoting safe and dignified working conditions in Zimbabwe’s extractive industries.



An Xray picture shows the broken hand of security guard who was assaulted

Young, Angry, and Fighting Back: The Struggles of Zimbabwe's Youth Climate Activists Against Extractive Industries

By *Witness Dhlamini*

Across Zimbabwe, a new generation of young activists is rising with one message: the country's natural wealth should not come at the cost of people's futures. From the coal fields of Hwange to the diamond-rich lands of Marange and the lithium mining zones spreading across the country, youth-led social movements are increasingly challenging the environmental destruction caused by extractive industries.

Armed with smartphones, protest placards, hashtags, and community campaigns, these young people are demanding climate justice and accountability. Yet behind the growing visibility of youth climate activism lies a difficult reality marked by intimidation, unemployment, exclusion, and limited power against wealthy corporations and political elites.

Zimbabwe's extractive industries have expanded rapidly in recent years, driven by global demand for minerals such as lithium, gold, and coal. Government leaders often present mining as the pathway to economic recovery, jobs, and development. But for many communities living near extraction sites, the story looks very different. Rivers are polluted, forests disappear, dust fills the air, and families are displaced from ancestral lands. Young people growing up in these communities are witnessing environmental destruction unfold in real time, and many are refusing to stay silent.

Youth-led climate movements have emerged as some of the loudest voices confronting these problems. Through community meetings, social media activism, environmental campaigns, and peaceful demonstrations, young Zimbabweans are drawing attention to the human cost of extraction. They are connecting local struggles to global climate debates and asking uncomfortable questions: Who really benefits from Zimbabwe's minerals? Why are local communities remaining poor while corporations' profits? And why should young people inherit polluted land and uncertain futures in the name of development?

But speaking out comes with risks.

One of the biggest challenges facing youth climate activists in Zimbabwe is political pressure. In a country where mining is deeply tied to political and economic interests, activism can quickly become dangerous.



Young campaigners who question mining projects or environmental damage are sometimes labelled as enemies of development or accused of pushing foreign agendas. Peaceful protests may be monitored, discouraged, or disrupted, creating fear among young activists. Many operate cautiously, aware that challenging powerful mining interests can attract unwanted attention.

For some youth activists, the fear is not only political but also personal. In small mining communities, speaking against extraction can create tensions with neighbours, local leaders, or even family members who depend on mining for survival. This creates a painful dilemma: how do young people fight environmental destruction when the same industry provides jobs in places where unemployment is already painfully high?

Zimbabwe's youth face one of the toughest economic environments in the region. Jobs are scarce, opportunities are limited, and many young people struggle simply to survive. In mining towns and rural communities, artisanal mining often becomes one of the few available income sources. As a result, some youths who care deeply about climate justice still depend economically on extractive activities. This contradiction weakens collective activism and makes long-term resistance difficult to sustain.

Money is another major obstacle. Most youth-led movements operate on tiny budgets, relying heavily on volunteers and small donations. Unlike large international organisations with offices, vehicles, and staff, grassroots youth groups often struggle to fund campaigns, travel to affected communities, or organise national events. *(To p8)*

Blood, Dust and Broken Promises: Inside the Human Cost of the Manhize Steel Dream

The contrast between industrial wealth and community suffering has become increasingly stark.

While the company ramps up steel production and export ambitions, nearby communities say they are sinking deeper into poverty due to land loss, dust pollution and rising living costs driven by mining activity.

“The company is making profits while people become poorer,” one insider source alleged.

Several sources also accused management structures surrounding the project of sanitising information before it reaches senior government officials. According to community accounts, media tours are often restricted to production sites while affected residential areas remain largely hidden from public view.

“There is a deliberate effort to hide the real impacts on communities,” one source claimed.

The project has also become entangled in Zimbabwe’s volatile political landscape. Sources allege that pro-government media platforms have amplified positive coverage while downplaying displacement and environmental concerns.

Community members further claim that some media productions sympathetic to the company were coordinated to counter growing criticism over relocation conditions and pollution.

Some residents reportedly resisted participating in staged promotional footage.

“They did not want their suffering turned into propaganda,” one villager said.

The Weekly could not independently verify all allegations raised by sources or secure responses from all individuals mentioned. However, what remains increasingly difficult to dispute is the widening gulf between the industrial success story promoted to the nation and the lived reality of many displaced families in Manhize.

Zimbabwe’s Critical Minerals Policy: Grand Ambition Built on a Crumbling Legal Foundation

The statement explicitly provides that “applications for mining rights on these minerals shall be by prior approval of the Minister of Mines and Mining Development.” It further states that “no person shall export any mineral listed in the Schedule in its raw or unbeneficiated form unless such export is authorised under a conditional transitional plan approved by the Minister.”

In effect, the declaration centralises extraordinary authority over Zimbabwe’s most valuable mineral assets in the office of the Minister.

While strategic oversight of critical minerals is legitimate, excessive executive discretion without strong legal safeguards creates fertile ground for opacity, selective enforcement, political patronage, and corruption. Mining governance cannot depend on administrative flexibility alone. Long-term investment, environmental accountability, and public trust require predictable laws, transparent institutions, and enforceable oversight mechanisms.

Yet Zimbabwe continues to substitute legal reform with ministerial control.

But beneficiation without institutional reform risks becoming another extractive slogan.

Zimbabwe still faces crippling electricity shortages, unstable currency conditions, deteriorating infrastructure, and inconsistent industrial policy, all major constraints to large-scale mineral processing. Without resolving these structural barriers, beneficiation requirements may simply become instruments of political negotiation and discretionary licensing rather than genuine industrial transformation.

The same concerns apply to the proposed State participation model.

The declaration states that “the State shall, through designated Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), exercise a mandatory minimum shareholding in the exploitation of these minerals.” In principle, State participation in strategic sectors is neither unusual nor inherently problematic. Botswana’s Debswana and Namibia’s Namdeb demonstrate that State equity can support national development when backed by strong institutions and transparent governance structures.

Zimbabwe’s proposal, however, remains dangerously vague.

This is an abridged version of an [Opinion](#) piece, read more at cnrgzim.org

Young, Angry, and Fighting Back: The Struggles of Zimbabwe's Youth Climate Activists Against Extractive Industries

Some activists use their own limited resources to print posters, attend meetings, or access the internet for online campaigns. Passion keeps these movements alive, but passion alone cannot pay for sustained activism.

Beyond financial and political struggles, young activists often face exclusion from decision-making spaces. Important discussions about mining contracts, environmental protection, and resource governance are usually dominated by politicians, business elites, and older leaders. Young people are rarely invited to the table, even though they will live longest with the consequences of climate change and environmental destruction. Many youth activists feel ignored by leaders who praise young people publicly but exclude them when real decisions are being made.

Despite these obstacles, Zimbabwe's youth climate movements continue to grow. Their activism is becoming more creative, visible, and determined. Some groups are promoting tree-planting initiatives, renewable energy projects, recycling campaigns, and sustainable agriculture as alternatives to destructive extraction. Others are documenting environmental damage, supporting affected communities, and building regional networks with activists across Africa. They are redefining climate activism not as a distant global issue, but as a struggle for survival, dignity, and justice at home.

What makes these movements powerful is not money or political influence, but persistence. Young Zimbabweans are refusing to accept a future shaped by environmental destruction and unequal development. They are challenging the idea that economic growth must always come before people and nature. Their fight is about more than climate change. It is about land, livelihoods, health, democracy, and the right to a sustainable future.

The battle, however, remains deeply unequal. On one side stand young activists with limited resources and uncertain protection. On the other stand powerful corporations, political networks, and global industries hungry for Zimbabwe's minerals. Yet even in this imbalance, youth-led social movements are slowly shifting public conversations around extraction, climate justice, and accountability.

As climate pressures intensify and extractive industries continue to expand, Zimbabwe's young activists are likely to become even more important voices in shaping the country's environmental future. Their struggle is not simply against mining companies or pollution. It is a fight for the right to inherit a country where development does not destroy the very communities it claims to uplift.

