



RESEARCH REPORT

IMPACT OF MINING ON
WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS IN
ZVISHAVANE, MIDLANDS
PROVINCE.



CENTRE FOR NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASM- Artisanal Small-scale miners

CEDAW- The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

CNRG- Centre for Natural Resource Governance

CSO- Civil Society Organisation

DDC- District Development Coordinator

EMA- Environmental Management Agency

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

GBV- Gender Based Violence

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

KII- Key Informant Interview

MMMD- Ministry of Mines and Mining Development

NGP- National Gender Policy

RDC- Rural District Council

SADC- Southern African Development Community

SDG- Sustainable Development Goal

ZAWIMA- Zimbabwe Association of Women in Mining Associations

ZELA- Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association

ZGC- Zimbabwe Gender Commission

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examined the gendered impacts of mining in Zvishavane District, Midlands Province, Zimbabwe, through FGDs and KIIs. The research was conducted in partnership with the ZGC and the CNRG, exploring how mining affects women's livelihoods, rights, and participation, and how institutions respond to these challenges.

The findings reveal that mining has caused widespread environmental degradation, including poisoned rivers, destroyed grazing land, and desecrated ancestral graves. While institutions acknowledged partial compliance with environmental safeguards, enforcement remains weak, particularly against small-scale and foreign investors. Women reported facing harassment, sexual exploitation, exclusion from compensation, and unsafe artisanal mining conditions, while institutional silence on gender-based violence reflects systemic denial of lived realities. Livelihood losses were severe, with farming, trading, and livestock rearing displaced, and limited benefits such as boreholes and school transport failing to meet these losses.

Moreover, conflict over land, water, and labour rights persists, with police and district offices often siding with miners, leaving communities without justice. Transparency and compensation processes remain contested thus, communities reported exclusion and corruption, while institutions emphasized partial compliance and selective compensation. Widows and daughters are particularly marginalized in compensation frameworks, reinforcing patriarchal norms. Despite these challenges, women demonstrated resilience through grassroots organizing, including savings groups, water monitoring committees, and associations such as ZAWIMA. These structures provide solidarity and advocacy but lack institutional recognition.

The report highlights cross-cutting issues including environmental harm is generally acknowledged, but gender impacts, consultation, and compensation remain disputed. This gap between community realities and institutional narratives undermines trust and accountability. The discussion situates these findings within broader literature and policy frameworks, noting that while Zimbabwe's Constitution, the NGP, and the African Mining Vision emphasize equality, transparency, and sustainability, operationalization remains weak. Grassroots resilience demonstrates agency, but institutional recognition is limited. Bridging this gap requires embedding gender safeguards, transparent consultation mechanisms, and equitable compensation frameworks.

The recommendations in the report have been structured at three levels. At the community level, there is a need to strengthen savings groups, monitoring committees, and associations, provide legal aid and rights awareness, support safe artisanal mining practices, and implement child rights programming.

At the institutional level, enforcement of environmental safeguards must be strengthened, gender-responsive conflict resolution mechanisms established, transparent and inclusive compensation processes ensured, and inspectors deployed regularly to monitor compliance. At the policy level, operationalizing the existing policies and laws in mining governance with explicit gender provisions, aligning with the African Mining Vision, and decentralizing governance to empower provincial offices could be critical steps forward.

In conclusion, mining in Zvishavane presents both challenges and opportunities. Environmental harm and gendered vulnerabilities are severe, but communities demonstrate resilience through grassroots organizing. Bridging the gap between lived realities and institutional narratives requires robust enforcement, gender-responsive governance, and recognition of grassroots agency. By implementing these recommendations, Zimbabwe can advance a mining governance model that is equitable, sustainable, and aligned with constitutional and continental commitments.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe's mining sector has historically been a cornerstone of the national economy, contributing significantly to GDP, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. However, the benefits of mining have been unevenly distributed, with rural communities - particularly women - bearing disproportionate social, environmental, and economic costs[1]. Mining's historical significance dates back to the pre-colonial era, with evidence of gold extraction as early as the 10th century. Colonial expansion transformed mining into large-scale operations encompassing gold, asbestos, coal, and chrome, establishing Zimbabwe as a regional mining hub by the mid-20th century[2].

In the post-independence era, mining remains central to Zimbabwe's economy but has caused widespread environmental degradation and displacement. Women are disproportionately affected due to loss of farming, trading, and small-scale economic opportunities that sustained their households for generations[3].

1.2 Case Focus: Zvishavane District

Zvishavane District in the Midlands Province is one of Zimbabwe's most intensively mined regions, hosting both large-scale operations (primarily chrome, platinum, and gold) and a growing artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector. The district's mining history dates back to the colonial era, when large concessions were granted with minimal regard for indigenous land rights or environmental sustainability[4].

The rapid expansion of Chinese-owned operations using environmentally harmful methods such as heap leaching and open-pit mining has intensified environmental damage. Communities report poisoned rivers, destroyed grazing land, desecrated ancestral graves, livestock deaths, and widespread deforestation. Women bear the greatest burden of these impacts as primary users of water, land, and natural resources for household sustenance[5].

1.3 Research Initiative

This study was conducted under the Community Water Monitoring and Advocacy Initiative, a partnership between the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) and the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG), launched on November 11, 2025. The initiative aims to document mining's gendered impacts on water, land, income, and health, capturing both community and institutional perspectives to inform evidence-based policy reform[6].

The research employed a qualitative approach using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with women from mining-affected wards and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with institutional stakeholders including District Development Coordinator (DDC), Ministry of Mines and Mining Development (MMMD) officials, and traditional leaders. Purposive sampling ensured inclusion of women most directly affected by mining operations.

[1] Malinga, W. (2018). From an Agro-Based to a Mineral Resources-Dependent Economy. *Forum for Development Studies*, 45(1), 71-95.

[2] Pikirayi, I. (2001). *The Zimbabwe Culture: Origins and Decline in Southern Zambezia*. AltaMira Press.

[3] Barry, M. (2019). Gender and Mining in Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*.

[4] Phimister, I. (1988). *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe 1890-1948*. Longman.

[5] CNRG Field Reports (2024). *Environmental Assessment: Zvishavane Mining Communities*.

[6] Zimbabwe Gender Commission & CNRG (2025). *Community Water Monitoring Initiative Terms of Reference*.

1.4 Policy and Legal Context

The study is situated within Zimbabwe's gender and mining policy frameworks. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), particularly Sections 17 and 52(2), enshrines gender equality and the right to bodily and psychological integrity. The National Gender Policy (NGP) provides a framework for mainstreaming gender across all sectors, including extractive industries. Zimbabwe has also ratified key international instruments including CEDAW, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, and the African Mining Vision (AMV), all of which emphasize women's participation, benefit-sharing, and protection from harm in mining contexts[7].

Despite these commitments, operationalization remains weak. The disconnect between constitutional provisions and women's lived realities in mining communities reflects systemic governance failures that this study seeks to document and address.

1.5 Institutional Developments

Recent institutional developments signal growing recognition of gender in mining governance. The Ministry of Mines and Mining Development (MMMD) established a Gender Mainstreaming, Inclusivity and Wellness Department tasked with integrating gender considerations into mining policy and practice. The draft Mines and Minerals Bill aims to modernize mining governance by enhancing transparency, community participation, and environmental accountability[8].

However, these developments remain largely aspirational. Field evidence suggests that institutional mechanisms for gender-responsive governance are under-resourced, lack enforcement capacity, and operate without meaningful community input. The gap between policy architecture and implementation constitutes a central concern of this research.

1.6 Women and Mining in Zimbabwe

Women in mining-affected communities occupy multiple roles as farmers, traders, caregivers, and increasingly as artisanal miners. Yet their contributions remain invisible in formal mining governance structures. Women report exclusion from consultation processes, denial of compensation for lost livelihoods, and exposure to gender-based violence including sexual harassment and exploitation at mining sites[9].

The feminization of poverty in mining communities is compounded by patriarchal norms that deny women land ownership, inheritance rights, and decision-making authority. Widows and daughters face particular marginalization in compensation frameworks that privilege male household heads.

1.7 Policy Gaps and Relevance of the Study

This study bridges the gap between policy commitments and lived realities by documenting women's experiences of mining's impacts on their livelihoods, rights, and well-being. The evidence generated aims to inform gender-responsive reforms in mining governance, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and support grassroots advocacy for women's rights to water, land, livelihoods, and safety[10].

The research contributes to a growing body of evidence demonstrating that sustainable and equitable mining governance requires meaningful inclusion of women's voices, experiences, and priorities at all levels of decision-making.

[7] African Union (2009). Africa Mining Vision. Addis Ababa: AU Commission.

[8] Government of Zimbabwe (2024). Draft Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill.

[9] Mhaka, S. & Moyo, T. (2022). Gender and Artisanal Mining in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 31(4).

[10] Zimbabwe Gender Commission (2023). Annual Report on Gender Mainstreaming in Extractive Industries.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.2.1 Historical and Governance Context

Zimbabwe's mining governance has evolved through distinct historical phases, each leaving lasting imprints on contemporary power relations and resource distribution. Pre-colonial mining was community-based and integrated into broader livelihood systems, with gold, iron, and copper extraction governed by traditional authorities[1]. Colonial rule fundamentally restructured mining governance through the Mines and Minerals Act (1961), which centralized mineral rights in the state and dispossessed indigenous communities of resource sovereignty[2]. Post-independence reforms, while rhetorically committed to redistribution, largely maintained colonial-era governance structures, with mining concessions continuing to privilege large-scale capital over community interests.

The liberalization era of the 1990s, driven by structural adjustment programmes, further entrenched extractive capitalism by opening Zimbabwe's mineral sector to foreign investment with minimal social and environmental safeguards[3]. This historical trajectory has produced a governance architecture that systematically excludes local communities – particularly women – from meaningful participation in decisions affecting their land, water, and livelihoods.

1.2.2 Gender and Mining Policy Frameworks

The intersection of gender and mining governance has received growing scholarly and policy attention. Feminist political economy perspectives highlight how extractive industries reproduce and intensify gender inequalities through displacement, environmental degradation, and the disruption of care economies[4]. Women in mining-affected communities face compounded vulnerabilities: loss of agricultural land undermines food sovereignty, water contamination increases care burdens, and the influx of male migrant workers heightens risks of gender-based violence.

Zimbabwe's policy architecture includes several instruments relevant to gender and mining. The Constitution (2013) guarantees gender equality (Section 17) and the right to a clean environment (Section 73). The National Gender Policy (NGP) mandates gender mainstreaming across all sectors. The Mines and Minerals Act, while lacking explicit gender provisions, is being revised through the draft Mines and Minerals Bill which includes provisions for community consultation and benefit-sharing[5].

1.2.3 Regional and International Commitments

At the continental level, the African Mining Vision (AMV, 2009) provides a framework for transparent, equitable, and optimal exploitation of mineral resources. The AMV emphasizes local value addition, community participation, and environmental sustainability. Zimbabwe has also ratified CEDAW, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, and the Maputo Protocol, all of which obligate the state to ensure women's equal participation in economic governance and protection from harm[6].

Despite these commitments, implementation gaps persist. Studies consistently document the disconnect between progressive policy frameworks and women's lived experiences in mining communities across Southern Africa. This study contributes to bridging that gap by generating primary evidence from Zvishavane District.

[1] Phimister, I. (1988). *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*. Longman.

[2] Government of Zimbabwe (1961). *Mines and Minerals Act* [Chapter 21:05].

[3] Saunders, R. (2008). *Crisis, Capital, Compromise: Mining and Empowerment in Zimbabwe*. *African Sociological Review*, 12(1).

[4] Lahiri-Dutt, K. (2015). The Feminisation of Mining. *Geography Compass*, 9(9), 523–541.

[5] Government of Zimbabwe (2024). *Draft Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill*.

[6] African Union (2009). *Africa Mining Vision*. Addis Ababa: AU Commission.

2. OBJECTIVES

The research study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the socio-economic impacts of mining on women's livelihoods in Zvishavane District, including effects on farming, trading, water access, and income-generating activities.
2. To assess the gender-specific vulnerabilities and protection gaps experienced by women in mining-affected communities, including exposure to gender-based violence, exclusion from decision-making, and lack of compensation.
3. To document women's resilience strategies and grassroots organizing efforts, and to provide evidence-based recommendations for gender-responsive mining governance at community, institutional, and policy levels.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design to capture the lived experiences of women affected by mining in Zvishavane District.[1] Data was collected through four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with women from mining-affected wards, artisanal small-scale mining backgrounds, and informal trading sectors, as well as four Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with institutional stakeholders including the District Development Coordinator, Ministry of Mines officials, and village heads.

3.2 Sampling Method

Participants were purposively sampled to ensure representation of women most affected by mining activities.[2] Selection criteria included membership in water monitoring committees, households experiencing direct environmental harm, women engaged in informal economy activities near mining sites, and women involved in artisanal mining. A total of 48 women participated in FGDs, while 4 key informants were interviewed.

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

Data was analysed thematically using a gender and human rights lens.[3] Community narratives from FGDs were cross-validated with institutional accounts from KIIs to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Themes were organized around governance, consultation, environment, gender impacts, livelihoods, conflict, transparency, compensation, and community resilience.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process, with participants assured that their identities would be protected. The research was conducted in partnership with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) and the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG), ensuring institutional oversight and ethical compliance.

[1] Creswell, J.W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications.

[2] Patton, M.Q. (2015). Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. SAGE Publications.

[3] Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), pp.77-101.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Governance and Regulatory Compliance

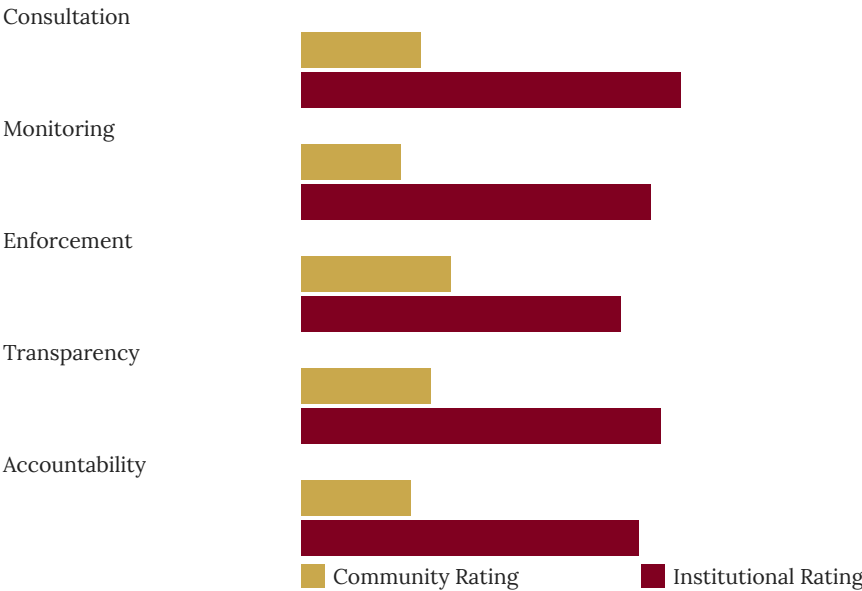
Community participants reported weak governance and regulatory enforcement in mining areas. Women described how mining companies operate without adequate oversight, with environmental impact assessments conducted as formalities rather than genuine safeguards. Institutional respondents acknowledged gaps but emphasized resource constraints and jurisdictional limitations.

- Key governance concerns raised by communities include:
- Lack of meaningful consultation before mining operations begin
 - Absence of regular monitoring and inspection visits
 - Corruption and collusion between local authorities and mining companies
 - Failure to enforce existing environmental and labour regulations
 - Limited community participation in decision-making processes

Fig 1.1: Comparative Table - FGDs vs. KIIs on Governance

Community Voices	Institutional Perspectives	Gap/Insight
No consultation before mining begins	Consultations conducted per regulations	Procedural vs. meaningful participation
No inspectors ever visit our area	Regular inspections conducted	Frequency and quality disputed
Chiefs bribed to approve mining	Community leaders consulted	Power imbalances in consultation
Police side with miners in disputes	Conflict resolution mechanisms exist	Access to justice limited for women
No accountability for damage	Companies required to rehabilitate	Enforcement gap identified

Governance Effectiveness Rating (1-5 scale)



4.1 GOVERNANCE (cont.)

Participant Testimonies on Governance Failures

"Hatina kumbobvunzwa kana chimwe chinhu - vakangouya vakatanga kuchera. Takangoziva kuti pane mine iri kuitwa patakaona magonyeti." (We were never asked anything - they just came and started digging. We only knew there was a mine when we saw the trucks.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Tinogara tichienda kumaoffice ehurumende asi hapana anoda kutiteerera. Vanotiudza kuti mining yakakosha kunyika asi isu tiri kutambura." (We keep going to government offices but no one wants to listen to us. They tell us mining is important for the country but we are suffering.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 15

"The challenge we face is that mining companies come with their papers already approved from Harare. By the time we know about it, operations have already started." - Village Head, KII

Institutional Response

"We conduct inspections as required by law, but our department is understaffed and underfunded. We have three inspectors for the entire district." - Ministry of Mines Official, KII

"The regulatory framework exists but implementation is hampered by resource constraints and sometimes political interference. We acknowledge that communities feel excluded from the process." - District Development Coordinator, KII

Key Governance Gap Analysis

The findings reveal a fundamental disconnect between institutional claims of regulatory compliance and community experiences of exclusion. While institutions cite procedural adherence (EIAs conducted, consultations held), communities describe these as performative exercises that do not translate into meaningful participation or protection. The governance gap is not merely administrative but reflects deeper power asymmetries between mining capital, state institutions, and local communities - with women bearing the greatest burden of exclusion.

4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Environmental degradation emerged as the most severe and widely reported impact of mining in Zvishavane. Women described contamination of water sources through chemical runoff from heap leaching operations, destruction of wetlands, deforestation, and loss of grazing land. Institutional respondents acknowledged environmental concerns but framed them within regulatory compliance narratives.

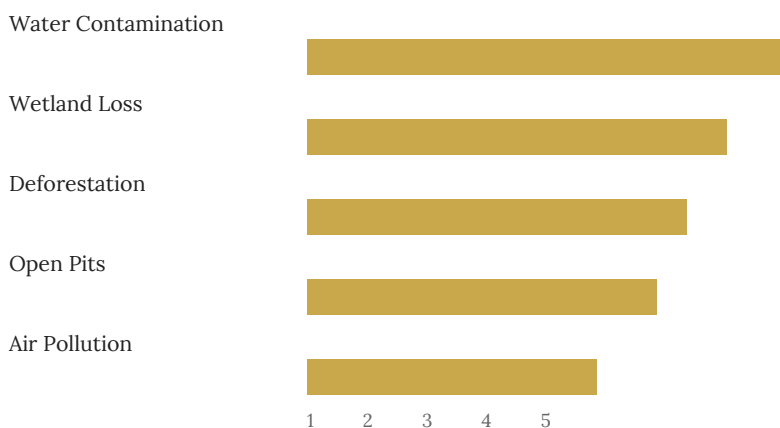
Key environmental impacts reported:

- River and borehole contamination from cyanide and mercury use
- Destruction of wetlands used for gardening and water collection
- Deforestation and loss of indigenous trees
- Open pits left unrehabilitated, posing danger to children and livestock
- Dust pollution affecting respiratory health
- Loss of grazing land leading to livestock deaths

Fig 1.2: Comparative Table - FGDs vs. KIs on Environmental Concerns

Community Voices	Institutional Perspectives	Gap/Insight
Rivers poisoned by chemicals	EIAs conducted before operations	Compliance vs. lived reality
Wetlands destroyed for mining	Wetland protection regulations exist	Enforcement failure
Livestock dying from contamination	No reports of livestock deaths	Data gap between sources
Open pits left unrehabilitated	Rehabilitation bonds required	Bonds insufficient or unenforced
Deforestation destroying livelihoods	Reforestation programmes planned	No evidence of implementation

Environmental Impact Severity (Community Rating 1-5)



4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY (cont.)

Participant Testimonies - Environmental Impacts:

"Mvura yedu yakasvibiswa nemachemicals anobva kumigodhi. Hatichakwanisi kunwa mvura yemurwizi kana kuishandisa kuminda yedu. Mhuka dzedu dziri kufa mushure mekunwa mvura iyi." (Our water has been contaminated by chemicals from the mines. We can no longer drink river water or use it in our fields. Our livestock are dying after drinking this water.) - FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Makoronga akasiwa nemigodhi haana kufukidzwa. Mwana wemuvakidzani wedu akawira mukoronga akakuvara zvakanyanya. Hapana akabvunzwa kana kubhadharwa." (The pits left by mines have not been covered. Our neighbour's child fell into a pit and was seriously injured. No one was consulted or compensated.) - FGD Participant, Ward 15

"Miti yedu yakatemwa yese. Hatichina huni dzekubikisa kana mishonga yechivanhu. Migodhi yakauya ikaparadza zvese zvataigarira." (All our trees have been cut down. We no longer have firewood for cooking or traditional medicines. The mines came and destroyed everything we depended on.) - FGD Participant, Ward 12

"Madirirano emvura kubva kumigodhi anosvika kuminda yedu panguva yemvura. Zvirimwa zvedu zvinofa uye ivhu racho rinenge raora. Hatichakwanisi kurima sezvataimboita." (Mine water runoff reaches our fields during the rainy season. Our crops die and the soil becomes poisoned. We can no longer farm as we used to.) - FGD Participant, Ward 10

Institutional Responses:

"Environmental Impact Assessments are conducted before any mining licence is issued. Companies are required to submit rehabilitation plans and pay environmental bonds." - District Development Coordinator

"We acknowledge that there are challenges with enforcement. The department is understaffed and we cannot monitor all mining operations effectively. We rely on companies to self-report." - MMMD Official, Zvishavane

"The EMA [Environmental Management Agency] is supposed to conduct regular inspections, but they are also under-resourced. When violations are found, the fines are too small to deter large companies." - Village Head, Ward 15

Key Insight: The gap between regulatory frameworks and enforcement capacity means that environmental protections exist on paper but fail to prevent ongoing degradation. Women bear the heaviest burden as primary users of water, land, and forest resources for household survival.

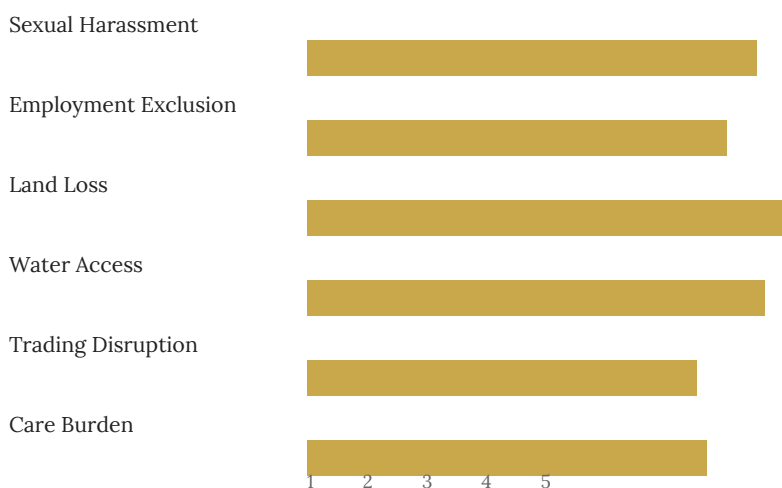
4.3 GENDER IMPACTS & LIVELIHOODS

Gender-specific impacts were pervasive across all dimensions of mining activity. Women reported harassment at mining sites, exclusion from employment opportunities, loss of farming and trading livelihoods, and increased domestic burdens due to environmental degradation. The intersection of gender and mining creates compounding vulnerabilities that affect women's economic independence, safety, and well-being.

Key gender and livelihood impacts:

- Sexual harassment and exploitation of women in artisanal mining
- Exclusion from formal employment in large-scale mining operations
- Loss of agricultural land reducing food security and income
- Increased distance to collect water due to contamination of nearby sources
- Disruption of informal trading activities near mining sites
- Unpaid care burden increasing as family health deteriorates

Fig 1.3: Gender Impact Severity Rating (1-5 scale)



Livelihood Disruption by Type



4.3 GENDER IMPACTS & LIVELIHOODS (cont.)

Participant Testimonies - Gender and Livelihood Impacts:

"Vakadzi hatina kodzero mumigodhi. Kana tikada kutsvaga goridhe, tinofanira kubvuma zvinhu zvisingafadzi kubva kuvarume vanotungamira migodhi." (Women have no rights in the mines. If we want to look for gold, we must accept unpleasant things from the men who control the mines.) - FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Minda yedu yakatorwa nemigodhi pasina rubatsiro. Ndaive nemunda wekurima madomasi nemiriwo yandaitengesa kumusika. Iye zvino handina chinhu." (Our fields were taken by mines without compensation. I had a plot where I grew tomatoes and vegetables to sell at the market. Now I have nothing.) - FGD Participant, Ward 12

"Mvura yatinofanira kutsvaga iye zvino iri kure chaizvo. Kare taienda kurwizi rwepedyo, asi iye zvino rwakasvibiswa nemachemicals. Tinoenda makiromita matatu kunotsvaga mvura yakachena." (The water we must fetch is now very far. Before we went to the nearby river, but now it is contaminated with chemicals. We walk three kilometres to find clean water.) - FGD Participant, Ward 15

"Varume vanoshanda mumigodhi vanotiitira utsinye. Kana tichienda kunochera, vanotimanikidza kuti tivabvumire zvepabonde. Kana tikaramba, tinorambidzwa kupinda." (The men who work in the mines abuse us. When we go to dig, they force us to agree to sexual acts. If we refuse, we are barred from entering.) - FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Murume wangu akashaya basa pamusana pemigodhi. Mombe dzedu dzakafa nemvura yakasvibiswa. Iye zvino ndinofanira kutsvaga mari yekudyisa vana vangu ndega." (My husband lost his livelihood because of the mines. Our cattle died from contaminated water. Now I must find money to feed my children alone.) - FGD Participant, Ward 12

Institutional Responses:

"The Ministry is committed to gender mainstreaming in the mining sector. We have established a Gender Mainstreaming, Inclusivity and Wellness Department to address these concerns." - MMMD Official

"We acknowledge that women face unique challenges in mining areas. The District Development Committee has prioritized gender-sensitive programming in mining-affected wards." - District Development Coordinator

"Traditional leadership structures must be reformed to include women in decision-making about land and resources. Currently, women are excluded from village assemblies where mining agreements are discussed." - Village Head, Ward 15

Key Insight: The gendered impacts of mining operate at multiple levels - economic (loss of livelihoods), physical (sexual violence, health impacts), social (exclusion from governance), and psychological (loss of autonomy and dignity). Institutional responses remain largely rhetorical, with limited evidence of substantive change at community level.

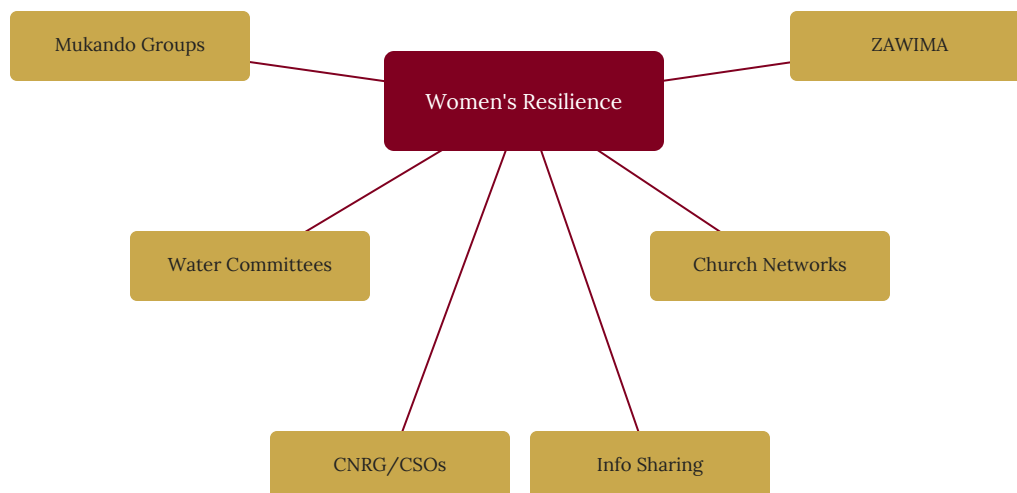
4.4 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Despite the challenges posed by mining, women in Zvishavane have developed remarkable resilience strategies. Communities have formed savings groups (mukando), advocacy associations, and water monitoring committees. The Zimbabwe Association of Women in Mining Activities (ZAWIMA) has emerged as a key organizing platform for women miners seeking safer working conditions and fair treatment.

Key resilience structures identified:

- Internal savings and lending circles (mukando groups)
- Community water monitoring committees
- ZAWIMA chapters for women in artisanal mining
- Church-based support networks
- Cross-community information sharing networks
- Partnerships with civil society organizations (CNRG, ZGC)

Fig 1.5: Network of Community Resilience Structures



"Takavaka mukando wedu kuti tikwanise kubatsirana - hatichadi kumirira rubatsiro kubva kuhurumende." (We formed our savings group so we can help each other - we no longer wait for government assistance.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 15

4.5 CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Community participants consistently reported that consultation processes are either absent or superficial. Women described being informed of mining decisions after the fact, with no opportunity to raise concerns or negotiate terms. Traditional leaders were identified as gatekeepers who often approve mining without community consent, sometimes in exchange for personal benefits.

Institutional respondents maintained that consultations are conducted in accordance with legal requirements, though they acknowledged that women's participation remains low due to cultural barriers and logistical challenges.

Key findings on consultation:

- Women are systematically excluded from pre-mining consultations
- Traditional leaders act as sole community representatives, bypassing women
- Language barriers prevent women from understanding technical documents
- Meetings are held at times and locations inaccessible to women with care responsibilities
- No feedback mechanisms exist to report consultation failures
- Communities are not informed of their rights under the Mines and Minerals Act

Participant Voice:

"Takangoudzwa kuti pane vanhu vachachera pano - hapana akabvunzwa kuti tinofunga sei." (We were simply told that people will mine here - no one asked what we think.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 12

"Musangano wakarongwa nesabhuku nevachera - isu madzimai hatina kukokwa." (The meeting was arranged between the headman and the miners - we women were not invited.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 8

Fig 1.4: Consultation - Community vs. Institutional Perspectives

Community Voices	Institutional Perspectives	Gap/Insight
No consultation before mining	Consultations conducted per law	Procedural vs. meaningful
Women never invited to meetings	Cultural barriers limit attendance	Systemic exclusion
Chiefs decide alone for community	Leaders consulted as representatives	Power imbalance
No feedback after decisions made	Information shared through channels	One-way communication
Rights under law unknown to women	Legal frameworks exist and are public	Access to information gap

4.5 CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION (cont.)

Additional Participant Testimonies - Consultation:

"Hatina kumbobvunzwa kana kamwe chete - takangoona magonyeti achiunza michina yekuchera." (We were never consulted even once - we just saw trucks bringing mining machines.) - FGD Participant, Ward 8

"Sabhuku ndiye anosainidzwa mapepanhau ese - isu hatizivi kuti zvii zvinenge zvanyorwa." (The headman is the one who signs all the papers - we don't know what is written.) - FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Pamisangano inoitwa, mitauro inoshandiswa inonetsa kunzwisisa - vanhu vekumigodhi vanotaura nechirungu kana chiShona chisiri chedu." (At meetings that are held, the language used is difficult to understand - mining people speak in English or Shona that is not ours.) - FGD Participant, Ward 15

"Kana tikashaya mvura kana minda yedu ikaparadzwa, hatina kwekuenda kunoendesa mhosva yedu. Hapana anotidzivirira." (When we lose water or our fields are destroyed, we have nowhere to take our complaint. No one protects us.) - FGD Participant, Ward 12

"Takambozama kuenda kuDDC kunonyora complaint asi takanzi hatina evidence. Asi evidence yacho iri pachena - minda yedu yakaparadzwa." (We once tried to go to the DDC to write a complaint but were told we have no evidence. But the evidence is clear - our fields are destroyed.) - FGD Participant, Ward 10

Institutional Responses on Consultation:

"The law requires that communities be consulted before mining licences are issued. We facilitate these consultations through traditional leadership structures." - District Development Coordinator

"We have introduced community liaison officers in some mining operations to improve communication between companies and communities." - MMMD Official

"The challenge is that consultation is often treated as a tick-box exercise. Companies hold one meeting, record attendance, and claim they have consulted. Meaningful participation requires ongoing engagement." - Village Head, Ward 15

Key Insight: The consultation gap represents a fundamental governance failure. Women's exclusion from decision-making processes violates both the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Section 17) and international instruments like CEDAW. The disconnect between institutional claims of compliance and community experiences of exclusion reveals that procedural consultation does not equate to meaningful participation.

4.6 CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

Mining-related conflict and displacement emerged as critical concerns across all FGDs. Women reported forced relocations without adequate compensation, destruction of homesteads to make way for mining operations, and violent confrontations when communities resist encroachment on their land.

Key findings on conflict and displacement:

- Families forcibly relocated without prior notice or fair compensation
- Ancestral graves desecrated and sacred sites destroyed by mining operations
- Women who resist displacement face intimidation, threats, and physical violence
- Loss of farmland forces women into precarious informal employment
- Children's education disrupted by forced relocations
- Displaced families receive inadequate alternative land, often infertile or waterless
- Inter-community conflicts arise as displaced families compete for resources in host areas

Participant Voices:

"Takadzingwa mumisha yedu usiku - takaudzwa kuti tiende tisati tapiwa kana chinhu." (We were chased from our homes at night - told to leave before receiving anything.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Makuva emadzitateguru edu akacherwa - mweya yavo haina zororo." (Our ancestors' graves were dug up - their spirits have no rest.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 15

"Murume wangu akarohwa paakamira achiramba kuti tifambe - ndakasara ndisina mudzimai." (My husband was beaten when he stood refusing to move - I was left without a provider.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 8

Institutional Response:

Institutional respondents acknowledged that displacement occurs but maintained that relocation processes follow legal procedures. The DDC noted that compensation is determined by government valuers, though communities dispute the adequacy of valuations. Ministry officials cited the Mines and Minerals Act as providing for compensation but admitted enforcement challenges.

Fig 1.6: Conflict & Displacement - Community vs. Institutional Perspectives

Community Voices	Institutional Perspectives	Gap/Insight
Forced relocation without notice	Legal relocation procedures followed	Process vs. experience gap
No compensation received	Compensation determined by valuers	Adequacy disputed
Graves desecrated by miners	Sacred sites mapped and protected	Protection not enforced
Violence against those who resist	Conflict resolution available	Access to justice limited
Alternative land infertile	Suitable land allocated	Quality of land contested

4.7 TRANSPARENCY AND COMPENSATION

Transparency in mining operations and fairness in compensation emerged as major concerns. Women reported being excluded from compensation processes, receiving inadequate payments for lost land and livelihoods, and having no access to information about mining revenues or community development obligations.

Key findings on transparency and compensation:

- Women are systematically excluded from compensation negotiations
- Compensation amounts are determined without community input or independent valuation
- No transparency on mining revenues, royalties, or community share ownership trusts
- Companies fail to disclose environmental monitoring data
- Compensation paid only to male household heads, excluding women-headed households
- No mechanisms for communities to verify compliance with social responsibility commitments
- Information about mining licences and permits is not publicly accessible

Fig 1.4: Transparency vs. Exclusion

The relationship between transparency and exclusion operates as a reinforcing cycle: lack of information prevents communities from holding companies accountable, while exclusion from decision-making ensures information remains inaccessible.

Participant Voices:

"Hatizivi kuti mari ingani iri kubuda mumigodhi yedu - tinongona kuona motokari dzavo dzakanaka." (We don't know how much money comes from our mines - we only see their nice cars.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 10

"Murume wangu ndiye akapiwa mari yekubhadharwa - ini handina kana cent rimwe chete kunyange ndiri ini ndaishanda munda wacho." (My husband received the compensation money - I didn't get a single cent even though I was the one farming that land.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 15

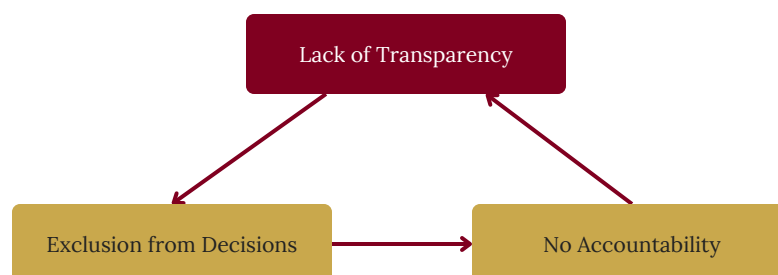
"Takakumbira kuti tione EIA report asi takaudzwa kuti hazvibvumirwi - tinofanira kungotenda zvatinouudzwa." (We asked to see the EIA report but were told it's not permitted - we must just accept what we're told.)

- FGD Participant, Ward 8

Institutional Response:

Ministry officials stated that compensation is governed by the Mines and Minerals Act and that valuations are conducted by certified government valuers. However, they acknowledged that the process lacks gender sensitivity and that women's specific losses (gardens, water access, firewood sources) are often not captured in standard valuations. The DDC noted that Community Share Ownership Trusts exist but admitted their effectiveness varies significantly across districts.

Fig 1.4: Transparency vs. Exclusion (Reinforcing Cycle)



Women trapped in cycle of information poverty and decision-making exclusion

4.8 CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHTS

Several cross-cutting themes emerged from the analysis of both FGD and KII data, revealing structural patterns that transcend individual thematic areas.

4.8.1 Intersectionality of Vulnerabilities

Women's experiences of mining impacts are shaped by intersecting identities including gender, age, marital status, disability, and economic class. Widows and women in female-headed households face compounded vulnerabilities as they lack male advocates in patriarchal governance structures. Young women in artisanal mining face sexual exploitation as a condition of access to mining sites.

4.8.2 Institutional Disconnect

A persistent gap exists between institutional mandates and implementation capacity. While policies and legal frameworks exist to protect women's rights and environmental integrity, enforcement mechanisms are weak, under-resourced, and often captured by mining interests. The newly established Gender Mainstreaming Department within MMMD represents a positive step but lacks operational budget and field presence.

4.8.3 Information Asymmetry

Communities operate with significantly less information than mining companies and regulatory bodies. This asymmetry undermines meaningful participation, prevents accountability, and perpetuates exclusion. Women are particularly disadvantaged as information flows through male-dominated traditional leadership structures.

4.8.4 Health and Safety Concerns

Women in artisanal mining face severe occupational health risks including mercury exposure, silicosis from dust inhalation, and physical injuries from unsafe working conditions. Women in surrounding communities report increased respiratory illnesses, skin conditions, and waterborne diseases linked to mining pollution.

Fig 1.6: Alignment and Divergence Between Community and Institutional Perspectives

Areas of Alignment:

- Both acknowledge environmental degradation is occurring
- Both recognize women face specific challenges in mining areas
- Both support the need for stronger community engagement

Areas of Divergence:

- Severity of impacts (communities rate much higher than institutions)
- Adequacy of consultation (institutions say sufficient; communities say absent)
- Compensation fairness (institutions cite legal compliance; communities cite exclusion)
- Enforcement effectiveness (institutions cite resource constraints; communities cite corruption)

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The findings reveal a significant disconnect between institutional narratives of compliance and community experiences of neglect. This gap is consistent with extractivist governance models documented across Southern Africa, where regulatory frameworks exist on paper but lack meaningful implementation at local levels[7].

5.1 Governance Gap Analysis

The divergence between community and institutional perspectives on governance effectiveness confirms what scholars term 'procedural compliance without substantive participation'[8]. Mining companies and regulatory bodies report adherence to consultation requirements, yet communities describe these as tokenistic exercises that fail to incorporate women's voices or address their specific concerns.

5.2 Gender and Intersectionality

The gendered impacts of mining in Zvishavane cannot be understood in isolation from broader structural inequalities. Women's exclusion from mining governance reflects patriarchal norms that position men as primary economic actors and decision-makers[9]. The intersection of gender, poverty, and rural location creates compounding vulnerabilities that existing policy frameworks inadequately address.

5.3 Environmental Justice Framework

The environmental degradation documented in this study constitutes a clear case of environmental injustice, where the costs of resource extraction are disproportionately borne by marginalized communities - particularly women - while benefits flow to distant shareholders and urban elites[10]. The contamination of water sources, destruction of wetlands, and loss of grazing land represent not merely environmental damage but direct attacks on women's livelihoods and food sovereignty.

5.4 Resilience and Agency

Despite these challenges, the formation of mukando groups, ZAWIMA chapters, and water monitoring committees demonstrates significant community agency[11]. These structures represent organic responses to institutional failure and provide foundations for more formalized advocacy and accountability mechanisms.

[7] Mabhena, C. (2012). Mining with a 'Sledge Hammer': Zimbabwe's Resource Nationalism and Community Participation. *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 11(4).

[8] Maconachie, R. & Hilson, G. (2013). Editorial Introduction: The Extractive Industries, Community Development and Livelihood Change in Developing Countries. *Community Development Journal*, 48(3), 347-359.

[9] Lahiri-Dutt, K. (2015). The Feminisation of Mining. *Geography Compass*, 9(9), 523-541.

[10] Schlosberg, D. (2007). *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature*. Oxford University Press.

[11] Scott, J.C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press.

5.5 Resource Curse Theory

The findings align with resource curse theory, which posits that mineral-rich regions often experience worse development outcomes than resource-poor areas. In Zvishavane, despite decades of platinum, gold, and chrome extraction, communities report deteriorating infrastructure, declining agricultural productivity, and increasing poverty. The paradox of mineral wealth coexisting with community deprivation reflects the 'paradox of plenty' documented across Sub-Saharan Africa[12]. Women bear the heaviest burden of this paradox as their productive activities (farming, trading, water collection) are directly undermined by mining operations while they receive none of the financial benefits flowing to mining companies and distant shareholders.

5.6 Feminist Political Economy Analysis

A feminist political economy lens reveals how mining governance in Zvishavane reproduces and intensifies pre-existing gender inequalities. The extractive economy operates through patriarchal structures that render women's labour invisible, exclude them from compensation frameworks, and expose them to gender-based violence with impunity[13]. The care economy – water collection, food production, health management – absorbs the externalities of mining without recognition or remuneration. Women's unpaid labour effectively subsidizes mining profitability by absorbing environmental and social costs that would otherwise require corporate expenditure.

The sexual exploitation of women in artisanal mining ('sex for access') represents the most extreme manifestation of gendered power relations in extractive contexts. This is not merely individual misconduct but a structural feature of governance systems that deny women formal rights to mineral resources.

5.7 Institutional Theory and Governance Failure

Institutional theory helps explain the persistent gap between policy frameworks and implementation. Zimbabwe possesses progressive constitutional provisions, gender policies, and environmental legislation. Yet institutional isomorphism – where organizations adopt formal structures for legitimacy without substantive change – characterizes mining governance in Zvishavane[14]. The establishment of gender desks, consultation requirements, and environmental impact assessments creates an appearance of compliance while actual decision-making remains captured by mining interests and patriarchal authority structures.

The newly established Gender Mainstreaming Department within MMMD exemplifies this dynamic: it signals institutional commitment to gender equality but operates without adequate budget, staffing, or enforcement authority to effect meaningful change at community level.

5.8 Implications for Policy and Practice

The theoretical analysis points to the need for transformative rather than reformist approaches to mining governance. Incremental policy adjustments within existing institutional frameworks are unlikely to address the structural roots of women's marginalization. What is required is a fundamental reorientation of mining governance that centers community consent, gender justice, and environmental sustainability as non-negotiable principles rather than aspirational goals. This demands redistribution of decision-making power, mandatory gender quotas in mining governance structures, independent monitoring mechanisms, and enforceable sanctions for non-compliance.

[12] Auty, R.M. (1993). *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*. Routledge.

[13] Elson, D. (2010). Gender and the Global Economic Crisis in Developing Countries. *Gender & Development*, 18(2), 201-212.

[14] DiMaggio, P.J. & Powell, W.W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147-160.

6. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that mining in Zvishavane has profound and disproportionate impacts on women's livelihoods, safety, and well-being[12]. The findings demonstrate a consistent pattern of institutional failure to protect women's rights and environmental integrity in mining-affected communities.

Key Conclusions:

1. Governance frameworks exist but lack meaningful implementation, creating a gap between policy commitments and lived realities for women in mining communities.
2. Environmental degradation from mining - particularly water contamination, wetland destruction, and deforestation - directly undermines women's productive activities and food sovereignty.
3. Gender-specific impacts including sexual harassment, employment exclusion, and increased care burdens are systemic rather than incidental, reflecting deep structural inequalities in mining governance[13].
4. Institutional perspectives consistently understate the severity of mining impacts, revealing a disconnect between regulatory narratives and community experiences.
5. Despite these challenges, women have demonstrated remarkable agency through the formation of savings groups, advocacy associations, and monitoring committees that provide foundations for accountability.
6. The absence of gender-responsive mining policies at national and local levels perpetuates women's marginalization and limits their capacity to benefit from or influence extractive activities[14].

The study underscores the urgent need for transformative approaches to mining governance that center women's voices, enforce environmental protections, and ensure equitable distribution of mining benefits.

[12] Bryceson, D.F. & Jønsson, J.B. (2010). Gold Digging Careers in Rural East Africa: Small-Scale Miners' Livelihood Choices. *World Development*, 38(3), 379-392.

[13] Jenkins, K. (2014). Women, Mining and Development: An Emerging Research Agenda. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 1(2), 329-339.

[14] African Union. (2009). *Africa Mining Vision*. African Union Commission.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made at three levels:

7.1 Community Level

- Strengthen and formalize mukando savings groups with financial literacy training
- Expand ZAWIMA membership and capacity for advocacy
- Establish community-based environmental monitoring systems
- Create women-led documentation of mining impacts for evidence-based advocacy
- Build alliances across affected wards for collective bargaining

7.2 Institutional Level

- Enforce mandatory gender impact assessments before mining approvals
- Establish accessible grievance mechanisms for mining-affected women
- Require mining companies to fund community development programmes
- Strengthen EMA capacity for regular environmental monitoring
- Ensure transparent compensation processes with women's participation

7.3 Policy Level

- Amend the Mines and Minerals Act to include gender-responsive provisions
- Develop a National Gender and Mining Policy aligned with CEDAW obligations
- Decentralize mining governance to enable local accountability
- Mandate gender-disaggregated data collection in mining-affected areas
- Establish a Mining Ombudsperson with authority to investigate complaints

Fig 1.7: Cluster of Recommendations



ANNEXURE A: ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

This annexure presents the attendance records for all Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted as part of this study. The registers include participant demographics such as name, age, gender, occupation, and role in the community or organisation, along with session details and consent information.

A.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

CNRG ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS REGISTER								
Activity: Research with ZGC		Funder: HBS		Date: 11/11/25				
	Name	Sex	Organisation/Institution	Age : 18-35 yrs	+35yr s	Phone Number	Photo Conse nt (Yes/N o)	Signature
1	Nollen Murembo	F	ZWMA		✓	0772770628	Yes	RD O
2	Shorai Mwaru	F	ZWMA		✓	0784489366	Yes	SM
3	Tolanda Chimwe	F	ZWMA		✓	0788427286	Yes	CA
4	Mould Moyo	F	ZWMA		✓	0785426728	Yes	AR
5	Chirwe Ngerwede	F	ZWMA		✓	0777030634	Yes	Chirwe
6	Margaret Mbanda	F	ZWMA		✓	0777392688	Yes	M. Mbanda
7	Sison Sibanda	F	ZWMA		✓	0779307466	Yes	Sibanda
8	Kuncku Mtsheni	F	ZWMA		✓	0780537054	Yes	K. Mtsheni
9	TAMWANA NEMOZASHE	M	ZGC	✓		0778966218	Yes	TAMWANA
10	Kudzo Shitsheni	F	ZWMA	✓		0780335178	Yes	Kudzo

Person Responsible: D. Nyamata Project Activity: Page No: 2/4

A.2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIS)

CNRG ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS REGISTER								
Activity: Research with ZGC		Funder: HBS		Date: 11/11/25				
	Name	Sex	Organisation/Institution	Age : 18-35 yrs	+35yr s	Phone Number	Photo Conse nt (Yes/N o)	Signature
1	RAIMOND KASHE	M	CNRG		✓	0772241220	✓	RAIMOND
2	DALWANTO CHIKWA	M	MLA & A		✓	078376053	✓	DALWANTO
3	TORIAS ZINGIZI	M	MLA & A		✓	0774444224	✓	TORIAS
4	RACHAEL CHINAMANI	F	MMMD		✓	0716718428	✓	RACHAEL
5	ERTA-SPEYOMANI	F	MMMD		✓	0773452217	✓	ERTA-SPEYOMANI
6								
7								

NOTES: • All participants provided informed consent prior to participation.
• Audio recordings and notes were securely stored in compliance with ethical guidelines.

ANNEXURE B: PICTURES

The following photographs were captured during the field research and stakeholder engagements. They provide visual evidence of the social, environmental and operational context of the study area.

1 WOMEN'S MEETINGS



A community consultation meeting with local residents to discuss project impacts and concerns.



Community convened to address mining environmental challenges, fostering inclusive and accountable governance.

2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

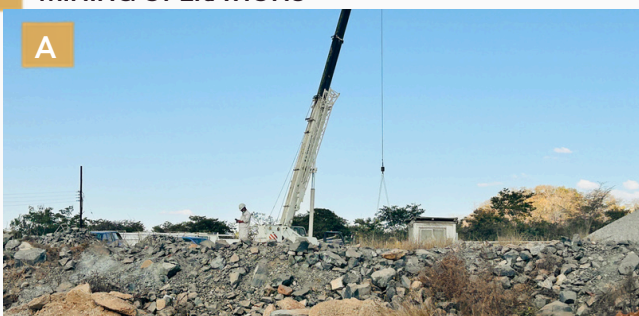


Impact on surface water quality due to siltation and runoff from mining activities.



Degradation of vegetation and land surrounding the mining area.

3 MINING OPERATIONS



A mine worker operates machinery at a mining site.



Cattle grazing close to a chrome mining operation in Zvishavane.

4 WOMEN'S GROUPS



Discussion with a local women's group on livelihoods and project expectations.



A female traditional leader at during an engagement session on water monitoring.



Report on the Impact of Mining on
Women's Livelihoods in the
Zvishavane, Midlands Province
