

The Weekly

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Lithium processing plant in Bikita: Zimbabwe tightens mineral exports, banning lithium, antimony & tungsten in push for beneficiation.

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Zimbabwe's Antimony Push Raises Questions Over Inclusive Value Addition and Beneficiation

Zimbabwe's decision to suspend exports of antimony and tungsten has brought renewed attention to two minerals classified by the Government as critical to the country's mineral development strategy.

This announcement by the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development is dividing opinion.

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What Is in a Name? Lab-Grown or Synthetic Diamonds

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What Is in a Name? Lab-Grown or Synthetic Diamonds

By Donald Nyarota

A diamond may be forever. Its name, apparently, is negotiable.

The latest quarrel in the diamond industry is over whether diamonds made in factories should be called “lab-grown” or “synthetic”. The African Diamond Producers Association (ADPA) wants “synthetic” to become the exclusive international descriptor for diamonds produced through industrial processes, while natural diamonds retain the familiar 4Cs grading system and carat measurement.

There is also a push that the Kimberley Process publicly state its position on the terminology used to distinguish natural diamonds from diamonds produced through industrial processes.

A recent letter penned by Ahmed Bin Sulayem Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) signals this intent, because “because India, China and the United States, three of the most consequential jurisdictions in the production, manufacturing, retailing and consumption of these products, all recognise and use “laboratory-grown diamond” within their respective regulatory, technical or industry-association frameworks.”

For Africa's diamond producers, like Zimbabwe, this is not merely semantics. It is about protecting the value of a natural resource that supports national economies.

This debate carries an additional and uncomfortable question: what exactly is play if the countries defend the value of natural diamonds? The answer cannot simply be a name.

It must be the value of the entire diamond economy, a value chain that remains under scrutiny over legacy oversights and illicit financial flows.

Zimbabwe's Marange diamond fields were discovered in 2006 and rapidly became one of the world's significant alluvial diamond deposits. Today, the country remains a natural-diamond producer, with the United States Geological Survey recording more than 5.2m carats of production worth about US\$164m in 2024.

However the paradox of Marange has always been that extraordinary geological wealth has coexisted with extraordinary questions about transparency, accountability and community benefit.



A diamond mine in Angola, where diamond trade is thriving in the backdrop of a global slump.

Research by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) and the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition has documented how communities around Chiadzwa, Mukwada and Chipindirwe have remained poorly served despite the enormous value extracted from their land. The civil-society coalition noted that Marange generated US\$124m from 4.2m carats in 2019, while communities still struggled with roads, water and access to basic services.

That history is not irrelevant to the laboratory-grown debate. It is the debate.

Zimbabwe's diamond industry is now confronting a dramatically different market. State owned miner the Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) told parliament in 2026 that rough-diamond prices had fallen sharply from their post-pandemic peak. It stated that as a result Zimbabwe's distinctive Marange stones were fetching roughly US\$22–34 per carat, compared with around US\$100 for better-quality rough from some other producers.

Diamond exports were worth about US\$164m in 2024, down 46% year-on-year despite an increase in extraction volumes.

The pressure is not simply coming from consumers changing their minds about diamonds. Laboratory-grown stones are changing the economics of the market itself, leaving Zimbabwe with a difficult proposition.

Zimbabwe Wins Diplomatic Ground as Land Crisis Moves Up Global Agenda

Zimbabwe may have emerged from a global conference on desertification with something more valuable than another declaration, a semblance of influence over the international politics of land, water and drought.

At the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from August 17th to 28th, Zimbabwe secured the chairmanship of the African Group of Negotiators. The position gives Harare a two-year mandate to coordinate Africa's negotiating position on land degradation, drought and climate issues across the major Rio conventions.

That is no small diplomatic prize, especially for a continent where drought, degraded soils and unreliable water supplies increasingly constrain agriculture and livelihoods, control of the negotiating agenda can translate into influence over finance, policy and international partnerships.

Zimbabwe also secured the hosting of the Fifth Session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Committee on Forestry Working Group on Dryland Forests in 2027. It further consolidated partnerships involving the Global Environment Facility, including GEF-7 Drylands and GEF-8 Sustainable Cities.

But the more consequential outcome may be the Ulaanbaatar Declaration. Its language is familiar, land restoration, sustainable rangelands, soil conservation and integrated water management, but its significance lies in the shift from treating drought as a periodic emergency to recognising land degradation as a structural economic and environmental problem.

Zimbabwe has endured recurring droughts, pressure on water resources and declining land productivity, while communities dependent on farming and natural resources face mounting uncertainty. Restoring degraded land is therefore not merely an environmental exercise. It is a question of food security, rural incomes and economic resilience.

The declaration also places financing at the centre of the response and calls for country-led action that includes women, young people, indigenous peoples and local communities. It gives Zimbabwe a diplomatic platform from which to argue that those living with degraded land should have a greater say in decisions about its restoration and use.

Declarations alone do not restore a hectare of damaged land, nor do they fill a dried borehole.

Zimbabwe's real test begins at home. Its new leadership role will have credibility only if international commitments are translated into stronger national planning, better water management, credible land restoration programmes and financing that reaches vulnerable communities.



Zimbabwe's Antimony Push Raises Questions Over Inclusive Value Addition and Beneficiation

By Staff Reporter

Zimbabwe's decision to suspend exports of antimony and tungsten has brought renewed attention to two minerals classified by the Government as critical to the country's mineral development strategy.

The Ministry of Mines and Mining Development says the suspension is intended to promote local value addition and beneficiation, ensuring that more value is retained within Zimbabwe before the minerals reach international markets.

Antimony, however, should not be confused with lithium. It is a separate mineral, commonly occurring in the form of stibnite, and Zimbabwe's known antimony occurrences are largely associated with gold-bearing geological formations.

Antimony has historically been mined or recorded in areas including Kadoma, Kwekwe, Shurugwi, Mberengwa and Bubi. The Kadoma area is particularly notable, with the historic Cam and Motor mine having produced both gold and antimony.

Tungsten has also been associated with several of Zimbabwe's mineral belts, including areas around Kadoma, Kwekwe, Shurugwi, Mberengwa and Bikita.

While the export suspension could encourage investment in local processing, questions remain over who will be able to participate in the new value chains.

The policy also needs to be understood within the broader debate around resource nationalism. Zimbabwe has increasingly sought to exercise greater control over its mineral resources and capture more value from extraction, rather than remaining primarily an exporter of raw materials. Resource nationalism, however, should not simply mean greater state control or restrictions on exports.

Emerging Miners Association of Zimbabwe (EMAZ) president Hyde Chatyoka cautioned against an approach that could unintentionally exclude small-scale and historically disadvantaged miners from opportunities created by the policy.

It should mean using the country's mineral wealth to build domestic industries, create jobs, strengthen public revenues and expand opportunities for, historically disadvantaged communities living in resource-rich areas.



Emerging Miners Association of Zimbabwe (EMAZ) president Hyde Chatyoka follows proceedings at a recent Critical Mineral Conference

"I am against the blanket export bans that lock out the historically disadvantaged persons from leveraging on resource availability in their communities and I support affirmative bans that force those who have the capacity to develop beneficiation industries locally," said Chatyoka.

His position highlights an important distinction between blanket export bans and targeted beneficiation policies.

A blanket ban could prevent smaller producers from accessing international markets without necessarily giving them access to processing facilities, finance or technology.

An affirmative beneficiation policy, on the other hand, could require companies with the financial and technical capacity to process minerals locally while creating opportunities for smaller producers to participate in the domestic value chain.

For Zimbabwe, this distinction is particularly important in communities where mining provides livelihoods but local processing infrastructure remains limited.

The Government therefore faces a challenge beyond simply stopping exports. It must create the conditions for local beneficiation while ensuring that small-scale miners, local businesses, workers and mining communities are not pushed out of the emerging critical-minerals economy.

The success of the antimony and tungsten policy ultimately depends not only on how much mineral Zimbabwe processes locally, but on who controls, participates in and benefits from the value created.

When the Mine Comes to Town: Unpaid Care, Economic Abuse, and Lost Community



By Tara Boule

We have all stifled a sigh when an older relative began an exhausting monologue with the phrase “Back in my day...”. Of course, things were different back then but is it really that much worse these days, we may have asked ourselves while the relative rambled on.

For the residents of Lukosi, Hwange District, radical changes from the proliferation of mining operations have occurred in less than a decade which have had devastating impacts on their way of life. At a Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Workshop organised by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG), participants shared the compounding vulnerabilities they faced as women in light of these changes.

A central theme which emerged from the workshop, which was held on the 4th of September 2026, was the social cost of the mining activity, invoking a comparison to what life was like before it began. Many of these costs stem from the unequal distribution of jobs between the genders, with women being told that they are not strong enough to work in the mine. Often, men move to live closer to their work which increases the burden of unpaid care work on women. This also results in an earning inequality in the relationship, which enables economic abuse to flourish.

A woman also explained that she was left vulnerable when her husband found a new partner where he had moved to work, then demanding a divorce. She was dependent on his income to look after their children and was concerned about what she would do without it.

This is not a situation unique to Lukosi or even to Hwange. With the extractive industry burgeoning in Zimbabwe, communities – and especially women – have been paying the price.

Research by CNRG found that women in Zvishavane reported grievances linked to mining, including environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods, inadequate compensation and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence.

These experiences reflect a wider pattern documented in mining communities such as Bikita, Mutare and Marange, where mining-related disruption has disproportionately affected women.

As CNRG holds these Women’s Rights Workshops across the country, the key information they aim to convey is how women can access justice in the face of this crisis. Barriers such as the lack of knowledge about the available reporting mechanisms, referral pathways, social stigma, and fear of further abuse prevent many women from coming forward about their experiences.

There has also been an erosion of community support mechanisms in many regions.

The influx of capital in these areas has resulted in bribery obfuscating some attempts for justice. Equipping women with the knowledge and capacity to demand equal treatment and push back against the unfair system is pivotal in the pursuit of justice and dignity.

The Workshop in Lukosi demonstrated that monumental changes need not happen over generations and highlighted the devastating costs of institutionalised inequality.

Tara Boule is pursuing her Masters degree in Global Studies at the University of Freiburg. She is passionate about community-led resistance to extractivism and feminist political ecology.

What Is in a Name? Lab-Grown or Synthetic Diamonds

If a natural diamond is to command a premium over a laboratory-grown diamond, Zimbabwe must be able to demonstrate why. Rarity alone may not be enough. Tradition may not be enough. And certainly, a regulatory decision to call one product “synthetic” and another “natural” will not be enough.

Zimbabwe's strongest selling point should be that natural diamonds create value far beyond the stone itself.

That means employment. Export earnings. Government revenue. Local business opportunities. Community development. Environmental rehabilitation. And, crucially, a demonstrable share of mineral wealth reaching the people whose land produces it. This is where Marange remains unfinished business. Even the ill-fated Community Share Ownership Trust (CSOT) remain an indictment on the government and how it has failed to provide a tangible community benefit sharing model.

CNRG's recent work in Manicaland argues that communities have long been excluded from meaningful benefit-sharing despite the province's enormous mineral wealth. A 2026 academic study similarly describes the Marange experience as one in which the adverse effects of alluvial diamond mining have outweighed the benefits for host communities.

There is therefore a danger in Africa's current linguistic campaign.

If producers try to defend natural diamonds primarily by making laboratory-grown diamonds sound inferior, they risk avoiding the more difficult question: has the natural-diamond industry done enough to justify the premium it demands? Zimbabwe cannot credibly answer that question with branding alone, it needs transparency and accountability, virtues it sorely lacks at the moment.

How many diamonds are produced? At what price? How much does the Treasury receive? What royalties are paid? What happens to the money? What do communities receive? How much land has been rehabilitated? What obligations do mining companies have to people displaced by extraction?

These are not peripheral questions, they are part of the product and indeed a part of the value chain.

A natural diamond should be able to carry a story that a laboratory cannot manufacture: that its value is connected to a finite geological resource and that its extraction contributes visibly and fairly to the development of the country from which it came.

That would be a formidable competitive advantage, but it requires diamond producers like Zimbabwe to turn natural rarity into social value.



The alternative is worrying, if consumers are told that natural diamonds are better simply because they are natural, while communities in places such as Marange continue to question whether diamond wealth has transformed their lives, the industry's narrative becomes increasingly difficult to defend.

There is also a broader economic lesson.

The global natural-diamond industry is under pressure. Natural diamond prices have fallen sharply while laboratory-grown diamonds have become dramatically cheaper. The consequences are already visible in southern Africa, where the downturn is threatening major mining operations and thousands of jobs.

It presents a dual battle, the first is in the marketplace, to convince consumers that natural diamonds possess qualities worth paying for.

The second is at home: ensuring that the economic value of those diamonds is distributed in a manner that gives citizens and mining communities a reason to defend the industry. The second battle may ultimately determine the first. If African producers, like Zimbabwe, Angola and Botswana, want the world to believe that a natural diamond is worth more than a laboratory-grown one, it must demonstrate that the natural diamond value chain itself is worth more.

That means moving beyond the language of scarcity to the language of accountability. Zimbabwe's Marange has already taught the world that a resource can be extraordinarily valuable underground and still fail to produce proportionate prosperity above it.

The next chapter of the diamond story should be different, and producers should not merely ask consumers to pay more for natural diamonds. It should give them a reason to.

Kamativi Solar Project Hit by Worker Strike Over Salary Arrears

By Staff Reporter

Workers at Chinese-owned New Dawn Solar in Hwange have taken industrial action over salary arrears, with the dispute reportedly escalating into a confrontation between employees and company representatives.

Video footage seen in connection with the incident shows scores of workers gathered at the company premises during the industrial action. Sources familiar with the developments said tensions escalated and some company representatives were allegedly manhandled by workers. A worker identified as Chiri was reportedly caught in the middle of the confrontation.

The industrial action has raised fresh questions about labour conditions at a company involved in one of the region's major renewable-energy projects.

New Dawn Solar Private Limited was granted a 25-year electricity generation licence by the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority (ZERA) on 17 July 2026 to construct, own, operate and maintain a 36MW solar photovoltaic plant integrated with a 48MWh battery energy storage system at Kamativi.

Kamativi Mining Company has said it is investing US\$25 million in the solar project, which is expected to reduce electricity costs, cut carbon emissions and support the mine's drive towards energy self-sufficiency.

However, workers have raised concerns over conditions at the operation, including the alleged failure to pay salaries on time. Sources said the latest industrial action reflected growing frustration among employees who believe their concerns have not been adequately addressed.

There are also concerns over the transportation of workers. Employees are reportedly being transported to and from the workplace in haulage trucks, raising questions about occupational safety and whether adequate transport arrangements are being provided for the workforce.

The reported use of haulage trucks is particularly significant given the risks associated with transporting workers in vehicles primarily designed for carrying cargo.

The allegations have not been independently verified, and New Dawn Solar had not, at the time of publication, publicly responded to the claims.

Poetry Corner



By Mukasiri Sibanda

Should i still mind my own business
When you steal to mine
The land i till

I now mill around the mine
No longer assured of my next meal,
It's a melee
To scramble for a job
To blow my hills apart, along with my soul.

What you pay me
cannot repair my despair
The disparity is widening,

Between the dispossessed
and those those who impose,
possess or dispose mining permits.

It's no longer a surprise
That we pay the price.
For the riches of our land
Are out of reach for communities.

With this breach of trust
I mind my own business
The mined land is mine.
I remind you

Please anticipate
If we don't participate
Without our cooperation
Your operation is akin to
Organ harvesting with no anesthesia.

Mukasiri Sibanda is developmental practitioner leading chartered governance and accountancy. Strategist. Spoken word artist. He brings dialogic creativity into policy engagement - mining, tax, debt, investment, trade and environment - transforming how we influence, learn and lead.