

The Weekly

A Weekly Newsletter by CNRG

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The environmental toll of mining in Shurugwi and other places in Zimbabwe took centre stage in a discussion on Asakhe. Story on page 4

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Musuma-1: Zimbabwe's Oil And Gas Moment But Will The Country Capture The Value?

Zimbabwe is preparing for a potentially defining moment in its search for oil and gas. In November 2026, Invictus Energy is expected to drill the Musuma-1 exploration well in northern Zimbabwe's Cabora Bassa Basin, targeting an estimated 1.2 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas and 73 million barrels of condensate on a gross mean, unrisks prospective-resource basis.

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Lithium Boom Leaves Buhera Community Choking On Dust

A lithium boom in Buhera is leaving communities along the road to Sabi Star mine exposed to relentless dust from heavy trucks. Residents say the pollution is entering homes and classrooms, damaging property and contributing to respiratory complaints, while measures intended to control the dust remain inadequate.

Bikita's Road To Opportunity and The Questions It Avoids



Chief Marovza with Bikita Minerals at the ground breaking ceremony of the road rehabilitation

By Staff Reporter

A road rehabilitation project by Bikita Minerals is welcome, and when a mining company describes a community investment as a route to opportunity, the public is entitled to ask how much is being spent and who decided it was the priority.

Bikita Minerals recently broke ground on the rehabilitation of the Sosera, Ndambani road in Masvingo, with Chief Marovza and village heads joining the ceremony. The company presented the project as part of its wider community investments in roads, clinics and water infrastructure.

For villagers, the need is obvious.

"I would say this road that comes from the Sosera turnoff going to what's called KwaNdambani, which had been in bad condition for years, the community has really struggled because of it," one resident said. "It's rehabilitation is something that will ease travel for everyone who uses cars or carts. We are very happy that it has been rehabilitated."

However, the celebration raises some inconvenient questions.

How long is the road? Was its rehabilitation identified as a priority by the community? How much is Bikita Minerals spending? What exactly will the rehabilitation entail?

When these questions were put to Chief Marovza, he declined to answer, saying they were not appropriate for the platform on which he had posted the announcement, a community social media group. A follow-up sent to his inbox received no response.

That is an odd standard of accountability. If a project is important enough to announce publicly, its basic details should surely be public too.

The questions matter even more given the scale of Bikita's mining operation. In 2025, the company exported 300,000 tonnes of spodumene concentrate, alongside 2,311 tonnes of pollucite and 15,620 tonnes of tantalite concentrates. Its stated annual production capacity includes about 360,000 tonnes of spodumene concentrate.

The financial scale of Bikita Minerals makes the absence of basic disclosure on its community spending all the more striking. The company reported revenue of about US\$47m in 2022, before its major expansion. By 2025, trade-data records put its exports at about US\$168.5m, although this is not equivalent to audited annual revenue.

Also, Zimbabwe's entire spodumene industry generated about US\$513.8m in export sales in 2025, from 1.128m tonnes, according to MMCZ data reported by Reuters. These are not insignificant volumes. They represent substantial mineral wealth extracted from Zimbabwean soil.

That does not make the road rehabilitation illegitimate. Quite the opposite: communities affected by mining deserve good roads, reliable water, functioning clinics and other public infrastructure. But corporate social responsibility should not become a substitute for transparency.

The important question is not simply whether Bikita Minerals is building a road. It is whether communities have a meaningful voice in deciding what gets built, whether spending is disclosed, and whether promised benefits can be independently verified.

A road can indeed be a route to opportunity but for mining communities, accountability should be part of the journey too.

Lithium Boom Leaves Buhera Community Choking On Dust



By Beverly Bizeki

A young girl in a Mukwasi Primary School uniform turns away from the road, covering her face with a pink cloth as a passing truck sends a cloud of dust into the air, she slows down, waits for the dust to settle and continues her journey home.

For children like her, this has become part of everyday life along the 35-kilometre road linking Gaza Rural Service Centre to the Sabi Star lithium mine in Buhera.

Operated by Max Mind Investments, in which China's Chengxin Lithium Group holds a controlling stake, Sabi Star combines open-pit mining with an on-site flotation plant that began operating in 2023.

The operation covers 40 rare-metal mining claims spanning about 2,637 hectares, although only five claims have confirmed resources and many of the remainder are still under exploration. Ore extracted from the pit is crushed, milled and processed by flotation into spodumene concentrate for onward transport.

Chengxin states this operation has capacity to process about 990,000 tonnes of raw ore and produce roughly 290,000 tonnes of lithium concentrate a year, meaning large volumes of material and supplies must move between the mine and regional transport corridors by road.

It is these roads where hour after hour, heavy trucks ferrying lithium from the mine pass through communities, leaving behind clouds of dust that settle on homes, vegetation, buildings and solar panels.

For residents of Mukwasi and surrounding villages, the dust has become an unavoidable presence.

A community village health worker, Senzeni Taruwona said there was little escape, even inside their homes.

"Whether you are outside or inside the house, there is no difference. The fine sand particles find their way into closed homes. Even when food and water are covered, the dust gets into everything. It settles on blankets and surfaces, making it difficult to breathe fresh air.

"It means even when we are sleeping, we inhale and ingest a lot of dust," she said.

Taruona said dust-related complaints were becoming increasingly common, particularly among children and elderly residents.

"Dust-related illnesses are on the rise in the village, particularly among school children and the elderly. We get about two or three patients every day complaining of chest pains or flu. But we cannot do advanced screening because there are no X-ray machines. Most people cannot afford to proceed to the hospital, so they do not get accurate diagnoses," she said.

For another resident living along the road, the immediate concern is not what the community may eventually receive from the mine, but the condition of the road itself.

"The situation here has gotten out of hand. The dust pollution is extremely bad. The lithium is theirs, but they should consider tarring the road to protect people's health," he said.

Mining communities bear environmental and social costs as benefits remain elusive



Zimbabwe's mining communities are increasingly bearing the environmental and social costs of mineral extraction while seeing limited benefits from the country's mineral wealth, the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) has warned.

CNRG project officer, Tanaka Ndongera, said communities in mining areas were exposed to problems including water pollution, displacement, dust and deteriorating air quality, raising concerns over whether mining was delivering meaningful development to the people living alongside mineral-rich projects.

"When you see how communities are trying to cope, you feel this is not something that is just being spoken about. There is real evidence on the ground that this mining has become more of a curse than a blessing," Ndongera said during This Morning on Asakhe on Thursday.

He said communities were not demanding excessive benefits from mining but basic rights, including a safe environment, participation in decisions affecting them and opportunities to benefit from the resources extracted from their areas.

Ndongera said concerns had particularly been raised around operations involving Chinese-owned or Chinese-linked companies, but stressed mining should ultimately be conducted responsibly regardless of who owns the operation.

"We are always saying mining should be done in a responsible manner," he said, calling for greater community participation throughout the mining process, including in environmental impact assessments and decisions affecting land and natural resources.

Ndongera also called for respect for the principle of free, prior and informed consent, arguing that communities should not be excluded from decisions involving mineral resources found in their areas.

He said Zimbabwe also needed to conclude the long-delayed Mines and Minerals Bill to provide a comprehensive legal framework for regulating the sector.

"The Mines and Minerals Bill has been hanging for a while. And we are just saying, let's do the right and proper thing," he said.

Ndongera said reliance on various statutory instruments had contributed to uncertainty in the mining sector and called on the government and Parliament to conclude the legislation.

He also raised concerns over inconsistencies in government policy on raw lithium exports.

"Today, there is a state instrument which says we are going to ban raw lithium export by January 2027. The next thing, there's an immediate ban on exportation of raw lithium. So those inconsistencies help and push people to raise a lot of questions," he said.

These concerns were echoed by Centre for Environmental and Corporate Accountability Research (CECAR), Executive Director, Nkosi Sibanda, who questioned whether mining communities were receiving the benefits intended to flow from mineral extraction.

Sibanda said mining companies operating in sectors including coal, lithium, gemstones, quarry mining and granite were required to contribute a percentage of their gross revenue towards a corporate social responsibility fund.

He said the funds were supposed to be ring-fenced and channelled back to communities in mining areas. "None of that has ever happened. And ZIMRA confirmed that money is collected from mining companies and is going to the consolidated revenue fund yet nothing is going back to the communities," Sibanda said.

He added the problem was not necessarily the absence of a mechanism to collect the money, but the lack of a corresponding mechanism to make sure it reached the communities for whose benefit it was intended.

"We're told the money goes to the consolidated revenue funds because there's no mechanism for disbursement of those funds. So there's a mechanism to collect money, but there's no mechanism to disburse that money back to communities," Sibanda said.

This article was written by Senzeni Ncube is a shortened version which appeared first on [CITE](#).

MP Demand Answers Over Mining Crisis at Christmas Pass, Penhalonga



By Staff Reporter

A legislator has called for urgent ministerial accountability over mining operations at Christmas Pass and Penhalonga Valley in Mutare District, alleging that operators are defying government stop orders while exposing communities to environmental hazards and miners to life-threatening injuries.

Speaking in the National Assembly on September 10, Hon. Brian James warned that the situation demanded immediate government intervention, these proceedings are recorded in National Assembly Hansard, 10 September 2026, pp. 4–8. Vol. 52 No. 74.pdf

“The escalating crisis surrounding mining operations at Christmas Pass and the Penhalonga Valley demands immediate ministerial accountability,” he told the House.

He alleged that contractors at Christmas Pass, initially cleared to undertake an accommodation project for an African university, had transitioned into large-scale mining and ignored official directives to stop operations.

“Contractors at the Christmas Pass site originally cleared for an African University accommodation project transitioned into a large-scale mining operation and ignored official ministerial cease and desist orders,” he said.

Hon. James also raised concerns about mining activities allegedly continuing at night, questioning who was allowing the operations to proceed.

“Mining activities continue under the cover of night in open contempt of legal notices,” he said, adding that this raised “urgent questions regarding who is enabling or protecting these illicit operations.”

In Penhalonga Valley, he criticised what he described as uncontrolled alluvial and artisanal mining, warning of the consequences for workers and the surrounding environment.

The legislator told Parliament that Mutare Provincial Hospital was recording a growing burden of severe injuries linked to collapsing tunnels and dangerous mining conditions.

“Mutare Provincial Hospital is recording an unprecedented influx of severe spinal injuries caused by collapsing tunnels and hazardous working conditions in the Penhalonga alluvial fields,” he said. He added that the hospital lacked the specialised equipment and capacity required to treat such injuries, calling for mining companies benefiting from the area’s mineral wealth to help fund medical care and rehabilitation.

Environmental risks were another major concern. Hon. James warned that excavations and planned tailings dams near Christmas Pass could threaten Hillcrest School and residential areas in Toronto.

“High altitude excavation and planned tailing dams on the upper fringes of Christmas Pass pose a catastrophic landslide risk to the low-lying Hillcrest School and Toronto residential areas,” he said.

His intervention prompted a challenge from Hon. Remigio Matangira, who questioned the description of mining as illegal and argued that its illegality had to be established.

“There is no illegal mining. Where does the gold go? Is it going to Britain or is it being bought by Fidelity? We have got a policy,” Matangira said.

Hon. James subsequently requested ministerial statements from the Mines, Health and Environment ministries. He asked the Mines Ministry to clarify the legal status of operations and continued night-time mining, the Health Ministry to provide figures on mining-related injuries and an emergency support plan, and the Environment Ministry to report on environmental degradation and mitigation measures.

Deputy Speaker acknowledged the concerns and said the appeal would be relayed to the responsible ministers.

The allegations and risks raised in Parliament now place the relevant ministries under pressure to clarify the status of the operations and explain what measures, if any, are being taken to protect workers, residents and public infrastructure.

Musuma-1: Zimbabwe's Oil And Gas Moment But Will The Country Capture The Value?

By Staff Reporter

Zimbabwe is preparing for a potentially defining moment in its search for oil and gas. In November 2026, Invictus Energy is expected to drill the Musuma-1 exploration well in northern Zimbabwe's Cabora Bassa Basin, targeting an estimated 1.2 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas and 73 million barrels of condensate on a gross mean, unrisked prospective-resource basis.

Country Manager Barry Meikle discussed progress to date at our Cabora Bassa Project in northern Zimbabwe, ahead of a targeted November 2026 spud, in an update recently.

The prospect has been given a company-assessed geological chance of success of about 38%, supported by encouraging seismic direct hydrocarbon indicators, including flat spots and amplitude anomalies.

The shallow Dande Formation target also allows for a relatively straightforward vertical well. Zimbabwe should be careful about declaring an energy revolution before the drill bit has spoken.

The resources are prospective, not proven reserves. Discovery, appraisal and commercial production remain separate hurdles. Musuma could transform Zimbabwe's petroleum prospects, but it could also demonstrate that geological promise does not automatically translate into commercial wealth.

That distinction is important because Zimbabwe's history with minerals offers a warning.

The broader African experience raises an even bigger question: will Zimbabwe negotiate its petroleum future from a position of national strategy, or simply welcome foreign capital and hope development follows?

As [Mail & Guardian](#) recently argued, the problem with Africa's resource relationship with China is not necessarily China itself. Beijing is pursuing its interests with clarity; the more uncomfortable question is whether African governments are doing the same. Africa's minerals can be critical to the global economy while remaining peripheral to African development.

That lesson applies directly to Musuma.



Invictus is a commercial company. Its responsibility is to its shareholders. Zimbabwe's responsibility is to its citizens.

If Musuma succeeds, Zimbabwe must ensure that gas does more than create another export stream. It should support electricity generation, industrialisation, local procurement, skills development and technology transfer.

The country should also demand transparent contracts, meaningful fiscal returns and clear rules governing how petroleum revenues are collected and spent.

Indonesia offers a useful lesson. Rather than rejecting Chinese investment in nickel, Jakarta used policy to force greater domestic processing, helping increase nickel-related export earnings dramatically. The lesson is not to shut out foreign investors, but to make investment serve a national industrial strategy.

Zimbabwe therefore faces two tests in November. The first is geological: is there commercially recoverable gas and condensate beneath Musuma? Invictus Energy seems to think so.

The second is political and economic: if there is, will Zimbabwe capture enough of its value to transform the economy?

A successful Musuma-1 could open a new eastern petroleum play and expand the Cabora Bassa resource base. Finding oil and gas is only the beginning and the real resource battle will be over who controls the value created after discovery.

Lithium Boom Leaves Buhera Community Choking On Dust

“The mining company keeps promising us beneficiary projects, but that is up to them to deliver or not. The road should be attended to urgently.”

The concerns extend beyond homes and roadside communities.

Nine schools, five primary and four secondaries are dotted along the route used by trucks travelling to and from the mine. They include St Johns Primary and Secondary, Nyamasanga Primary, St Albans Primary and Secondary, Mavangwe Primary and Secondary, and Mukwasi Primary and Secondary.

For learners, the road is part of their daily commute, while the dust follows them into the classroom.

“Learners in these schools are some of the most affected. They cannot escape the dust pollution on any given day considering where their schools are located. If you get into the classrooms, it is dust everywhere,” said a parent.

The parent said noise from passing trucks was also affecting the school environment, while teachers living within the communities faced the same conditions.

Buhera Residents Network Trust representative Georgina Njerera said the organisation had engaged the mining company over the pollution concerns.

According to Njerera, documents obtained from the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) indicated that the mine was required to sprinkle water along the road to control dust.

“What we discovered when we went to EMA is shocking. We realised that the mine had been allowed to operate while sprinkling water on the road to curb dust pollution, but the mine only sprinkles water for less than five kilometres at specific points, including the clinic,” she said.

Contacted for comment on the the residents’ complaints, Buhera EMA District Environmental Officer Kangara asked the reporter to visit the EMA offices in Buhera as they cannot disclose information on the ground.

“Why did you not visit the EMA offices in Buhera to get the information. We do not disclose information over the phone. We do not work like that, we work with the protocol,” said the Kangara.

The writer Beverly Bizeki is a journalist writing for TellZim News her reporting focuses on women’s leadership, health, climate justice, governance and community rights.

Poetry Corner

Follow the Money

By Donald Nyarota

We follow the money,
For they woo us with promises of milk and honey,
Not to give or receive,
But to buy with the salaries we receive.

We follow the money,
Past the speeches and the handshakes
Past contracts signed behind closed doors,
And promises that leave us wanting more.

We follow the money,
Tracing the taxes, levies and royalties
From the gold dug from our ground,
And the wealth that should come back around.

We follow the money,
From the mine to the ministry,
From the boardroom to the district hall,
And ask: Who gets what, and who gets it all?

We follow the money,
Where public funds quietly disappear,
Where figures are hidden and accounts unclear,
Where communities bear the cost year after year.

We follow the money,
Because resources belong to the people,
The rivers, the forests, the minerals below
Their value must serve those who bear the blow.

We follow the money,
Not because we envy those who earn,
But because accountability is our concern.
If it is public, let the public see;
If it is ours, let it work for you and me.

So follow the money,
To unveil this corporate veil
For beneficial owners we want to reveal
Ask where it came from, ask where it goes,
Ask who decides and who really knows.
For silence protects the powerful few
But transparency gives the people their due.

We follow the money,
Not tomorrow, but today,
Because every dollar that slips away
Is a clinic unfunded, a road delayed,
A school without books, a community betrayed.

So follow the money
Trace every coin, every cent, every fee.
Because when communities see,
They can demand accountability