

COMMUNITY VOICES ON MINING



**ZIMBABWE ENVIRONMENTAL
LAW ASSOCIATION
(ZELA)**

From the GREAT DYKE to the GREAT THREAT...

**“Chrome Mining”
Zvishavane District-Midlands Province
Zimbabwe**

COMMUNITY VOICES ON MINING

“From The Great Dyke to The Great Threat”

**A narrative and picture testament of the impacts of chrome
mining activities in Zvishavane.**

By

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Background and Introduction

"I have learnt that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel"
Maya Angelou

Much has been said or perhaps done to move duty bearers (government and mining companies) into action on mitigating the negative impacts of mining. This narrative and picture piece seeks to appeal the emotions of duty bearers to take an urgent audit of the impacts of their actions or inactions in addressing what many locals call, in plain Shona language, "gona rama chingura" (the curse) that has brought poverty, misery and even death to some communities living near chrome mining areas in the Great Dyke. The Great Dyke has turned out to be The Great Threat.

The presence of abundant mineral wealth offers exciting opportunities to charm the socioeconomic transformation of poor host mining communities and the general citizenry. This is acknowledged by the country's 5 year economic blueprint; the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET 2013-2018) which is anchored on "judicious exploitation of mineral resources". Yet in reality, the socio-economic charm and benefits from mineral wealth abundance has been privatised by corporates and few corrupt, politically well-connected individuals. Host mining communities find obscured the "**C**" in the **C**harm of mineral wealth abundance but only see the **Harm**. The **Great Dyke** has been tainted into The **Great Threat**.

The Great Dyke is host to rich mineral deposits including gold, silver, chromium, platinum, nickel and asbestos among many others. It stretches for about 550 kilometers almost cutting across the center of Zimbabwe. **1**

Zimbabwe has the second largest known reserves of chrome after South Africa. Chrome mining is carried out in most parts of The Great Dyke. The three largest claim owners with high quality ore grade (58%-62% concentrate) are Zimbabwe Mining and Alloy Smelting Company (ZIMASCO), Zimalloys and Maranatha Ferrochrome respectively **2**. ZIMASCO's major shareholder is Sinosteel Corporation from China. Chinese investments in mining are famed for poor labour and environmental practices in Africa. Most of the chrome mining activities take place through tributaries. A tributary arrangement is a form of subcontracting or leasing of mining ground on a temporary basis to a third party to exploit minerals in return for paying an economic rent to the lessor-that is the owner of the mineral rights. This is in terms of the Mines and Minerals Act **3**.

The following findings were compiled through observations and interviews with community members in Mapanzure and Mhondongori located along the Great Dyke.

1 Guilbert, J.M., and Park, C.F.Jr. 1986 *The Geology of Ore Deposits*, Freeman, ISBN 0-7167-1456-6

2 Africa: Mining - Chromite Mining Mbendi

3 Section 283-290 of the Mines and Minerals (Chapter 21:05)

Impacts of Chrome Mining

Environmental Impacts

Chrome mining activities have overwhelmed host communities with massive environmental costs which bring collateral violations to their economic, social and cultural rights.

Mapanzure and Mhondongori in Zvishavane have been affected with massive deforestation, disappearance of wetlands and land degradation caused by chrome mining. Deforestation contributes to climate change which wreaks havoc (extreme weather patterns like droughts or floods) to livelihoods of rural communities who are dependent on subsistence farming.



Figure 1: Land Degradation in Mapanzure



Figure 2: Deforestation in Mhondongori



There are numerous deep open, unsecured and un-rehabilitated mining pits most of which are now water pools. Some of these mining pits have been left open for nearly 20 year. One pool measured nearly 13 metres deep before reaching the water surface. It was not possible to measure the complete depth of the pool due to the risks posed. These pits have come as a curse or what the locals call “gona ra machingura rapedza hama” for injuring people and livestock in some cases resulting in deaths.



Figure 3: Pools of deep unsecured mining pits in Mapanzure

The Impacts of Chrome mining activities in Zvishavane

Impacts of Chrome Mining

Social Impacts

"Some people enjoy the luxury of seeing the beautiful colours brought by sun set. To the people of Mapanzure, sunset accelerates hazards to people and livestock by hiding the open deep unsecured mining pits. Without full moonlight, there is literally a curfew in areas where chrome mining is"
Mukasiri Sibanda ZELA

Meet Fortunate Siziba a victim of chrome mining in Mapanzure. Ironically, "Unfortunate" Siziba is now disabled from the injuries sustained after falling into an open deep unsecured mining pit operated by Madatta a tributary operator in 2002. Earlier on that fateful day, Fortunate had gone fishing with his friend. On his way back home late evening, little did he know that Madatta's mining pit had encroached into their usual path way.



Figure 4: Sunset in Mapanzure



Figure 5: Fortunate Siziba - victim of chrome mining

Fortunate Siziba never received compensation from the chrome mining company Madatta. The only help he got from the concerned chrome miner (Madatta) was to be carried in the bucket of a front loader to the nearest clinic. For nearly six months he stayed in hospital incurring medical expenses which the mining company never bothered to contribute and let alone apologising and acknowledging responsibility over the injuries. He moans that his left side of the body is now weak and he is now partially blind.



Figure 6: Deep unsecured mining pits in Mapanzure



Women bear the disproportionate burden of chrome mining impact

Fortunate is married with one child. The wife is now shouldering the burden of doing most of the heavy manual labour as her husband is now incapacitated.

The Impacts of Chrome mining activities in Zvishavane

Impacts of Chrome Mining

Social Impacts



Figure 7: Fortunate Siziba's Wife



Figure 8: Fortunate Siziba's family

Fortunate's mother was overwhelmed with demands of caring for her sick son and her husband who were both admitted at 2 different hospitals in Bulawayo (Mpilo and United Bulawayo Hospitals). In some instances, she had to frequently walk to and from the 2 hospitals to take care of her son and husband. Fortunate Siziba's medical costs were equated to 2 cows since they were met in Zimbabwe dollar which has now been rendered not only less use but useless due to massive hyperinflation.

Shattered dreams

"I was a good athlete at school and I fancied a professional career as a soldier. Now that I am disabled after falling into the chrome mining pit my dreams have been shattered"

Fortunate Siziba

Lives lost from unsecured chrome mining pits

Nyepesai Dube allegedly lost her 9 year old daughter (Asa Mpofu) after she fell and drowned into an open, deep and unsecured chrome mining pit in October 2012. No compensation was given by ZIMASCO or PETMAZ the claim owner and the tributary operator respectively.



Figure 9: Nyepesai Dube - Asa Mpofu's mother



Figure 10: Asa Mpofu's grave

Impacts of Chrome Mining

Cultural Impacts

Chrome mining has desecrated sacred sites revered by local communities. One such place is "Dzivarisekwa" a pool of water that has disappeared as a result of chrome mining. Traditional Chief Mapanzure tried to stop chrome miners from desecrating Dzivarisekwa but the miners paid no attention.



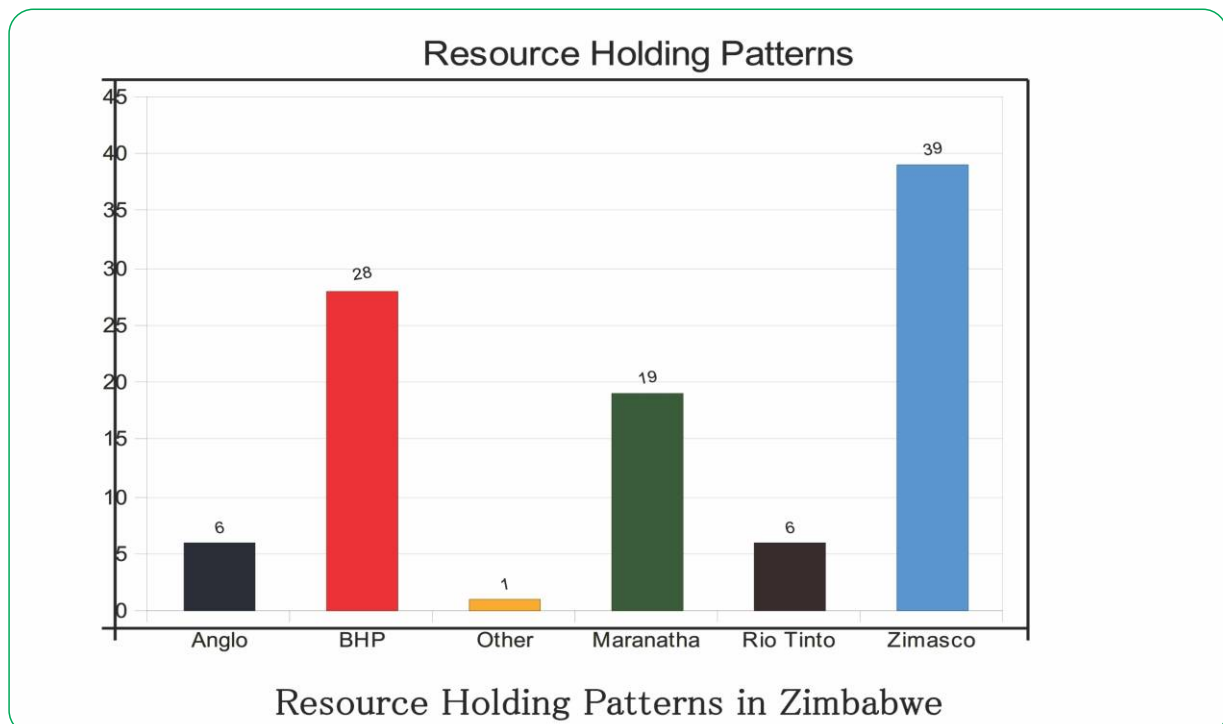
Figure 11: Dzivarisekwa – A Sacred place in Mapanzure desecrated by chrome mining



Figure 12: Mr Makaya - Chief Mapanzure's Secretary

Economic Impacts

Most of the rich chrome ore bodies were pegged by ZIMASCO a century ago during the colonial era in 1904. Most of the chrome mining is done through contracting or tributary arrangements where the claim holders lease their mineral claims. There is limited space for host mining communities to own and exploit rich chrome ore reserves on their own terms.



Source: 2013 Portfolio committee on mines and energy report-Chrome mining sector in Zimbabwe

The Impacts of Chrome mining activities in Zvishavane

Impacts of Chrome Mining

Economic Impacts

The small scale miners operating the tributaries allege that ZIMASCO dictates the price range of \$45-\$65 per tonne which they deem unsustainable. Government banned export chrome unrefined in 2010 to promote beneficiation. This chrome ban also contributed to depressed local chrome prices. There is limited transparency and accountability involving the weighing and grading of chrome which is done by ZIMASCO in Kwekwe in the absence of the tribute miners. Tribute miners allege that their tributary agreements with ZIMASCO are not registered. As a result ZIMASCO unfairly treats the tribute miners as they lack security of tenure. ZIMASCO is accused of taking several months to pay tribute miners straining labour relations for small scale tributary operators who have thin working capital. Sponsors who bring equipment and working capital partners with small scale operators charge exorbitant financing costs which cream of profits.

Apart from a few projects benefiting just a few people, there was no tangible proof of Corporate Social Investments (CSIs) by chrome miners in Mapanzure and Mhondongori. The only story on CSIs in these areas is from Zvishavane Community Share Ownership Trust/Scheme (ZCSOT/S) funded by Mimosa, a platinum mining company to the tune of US\$6 million.



Figure 13: Infrastructure deficit - Mapirimira Primary School in Mapanzure



Figure 14: Block constructed by CSOT at Sinami Primary School in Mapanzure

Loss of Grazing Land and pastures

Chrome ore bodies being exploited through open cast mining causing massive land degradation. Grazing land for livestock is fast diminishing threatening livestock production which is a significant source of food, income and power for tilling the land. Far from deriving economic benefits from the abundant chrome mineral wealth, the host chrome mining communities are slowly being driven into poverty.



Figure 15: Cattle grazing in Mapanzure



Figure 16: Grazing land lost from failure to rehabilitate

The Impacts of Chrome mining activities in Zvishavane

Impacts of Chrome Mining

Economic Impacts

Loss of Livestock

Villagers are losing their livestock either by falling or being trapped by mud in the open deep and unsecured disused chrome mining pits.



Figure 17: A cattle that fell and died in a disused open chrome mining pit in Mhondongori

Challenges brought by tributaries

The practice of operating tributaries or contracting has led to prejudice of host mining communities. ZIMASCO the claim holder on the one hand alleges that the responsibility of rehabilitating the environment rests with the tributary miners. Whilst on the other hand, tributary operators allege that ZIMASCO (claim owner) is responsible for environmental rehabilitation since it withholds environmental rehabilitation fees on chrome sales. At law ZIMASCO as the claim owner is liable for land rehabilitation regardless of contracting or tributary arrangements used to mine chrome. Tributary miners allege that ZIMASCO no longer disclose environmental rehabilitation fees on chrome sales invoices bringing to fore issues of lack of transparency and accountability.



Figure 18: Mr V. M. Dube - Tributary Operator

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Chrome mining has caused ominous environmental, economic, social and cultural rights violations of host mining communities turning The Great Dyke into the Great Threat to lives, livestock and sources of livelihoods for communities. There is massive land degradation, deforestation and disappearance of wetlands in Mapanzure and Mhondongori. There are numerous deep, open and unsecured mining pits that have led to injuries of people and livestock and in some cases deaths. Most of the chrome mining claims along The Great Dyke are owned by ZIMASCO, ZIMALLOYS and Maranatha. Participation of host mining communities in chrome mining is limited to contracts which are lopsided in favour of the claim owners.

"Are we now trading a life for the rehabilitation of a chrome mining pit? How many people should be injured? How many lives should be lost before the danger of open and unsecured mining pits is eliminated"

Fortunate Siziba a victim

Recommendations

- Government should implement the recommendations of the Chrome Mining Report by the Parliamentary Committee on Mines and Energy as well as take action to monitor the environmental, social and economic impacts of ZIMASCO and other chrome mining companies along the Great Dyke.
- Open and unsecured mining pits that are disused or in use must be rehabilitated or fenced by mining companies to eliminate the risk posed to people and animals.
- Mining companies must compensate those who have lost their livestock, loved ones or injured as a result of falling into open and unsecured mining pits.
- The cultural rights of local communities must be respected and mining companies should stop desecrating the cultural sites.
- There is need to enhance participation of host communities in chrome mining by forfeiting claims that are not being utilised by big mining companies. This will stop the current unfair practice where indigenous participation in chrome mining is largely restricted to contracting which lopsided in favour of claim owners.
- Issuance or renewal of mining license should be merit based considering the performance on issues such as environmental rehabilitation, corporate social investments and a social license to operate.

Produced By
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Tel: (04) 573601-3 , www.zela.org
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