

DIAMOND MINING AND LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE: KEEPING THE VULNERABLE GROUPS IN FOCUS

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the Zimbabwean mining industry and underscores the social and ethical implications of the mining activities for the vulnerable groups. It surveys, in particular, the level of corporate social responsibility that has been accorded these groups by both the government and the mining corporations. Focusing on the vulnerable communities of Marange, in Eastern Zimbabwe, which have been at the receiving end of their country's diamond mining activities over the past decade, and Juxtaposing this with the global best practices in other better organised systems of the world, the paper found that the Marange experience is, by every standard, one of the worst human rights atrocities in history. Despite the overflow of alluvial diamonds, considered as the most prized natural resource in the world, the Marange experience has been that of neglect of the environment, economic retrogression, servitude; bloodletting, abject poverty and permanent displacement of indigenous communities. Africa contributes about 25% of global natural resources. Yet, it is trapped in the whirlwind of perpetual underdevelopment, while these resources are habitually frittered away to other parts of the world. Likewise, due to lack of focused leadership, Zimbabwe's local communities lie in ruins, while the rest of the world appropriates their natural heritage. The sources of data for this study were library and archival materials, as well as secondary (Internet) sources, which were subjected to critical analysis.

Keywords: Diamond mining; ethics; leadership; Marange; ZANU-PF

Introduction

For many years, local and international civil liberty organisations had pressured Mugabe's regime and the international community about the gross human rights violations going on in Marange (Mupfumi, 2017). But the ZANU-PF-led Zimbabwean government preferred to deny what was public knowledge. Then, in 2016, ten years following the discovery of diamond in the Marange district of eastern Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe, declared that an estimated US\$15 billion worth of diamond had been extracted by companies and removed from Zimbabwe with the connivance of his ministers, and that only a paltry amount (less than US\$2 billion) had entered the national coffers (Christie, 2016; Saunders, 2016). Africa alone accounts for at least 25% of global natural resources output (Schodde, 2015).

What went wrong? Why did Zimbabwe's diamond explosion fail to turn the country's economy round for good? In light of recent political developments in Zimbabwe, the paper submits that the solution to the crisis ultimately lies in the willingness of the emerging government to provide inclusive and transparent leadership to Zimbabweans, and to effectively monitor the entire diamond extraction and production process, through the implementation of extant international laws

and regulations for environmental management and protection, indigenising them where necessary.

Diamond in Marange

The discovery of diamond deposits in Marange came mid-year in 2006. Before this apparently sudden 'appearance', Marange held no particularly extraordinary significance or interest to the world. Chiponda and Saunders (2016: 172-3) note that at this point: 'people did not fight over the stones; no one claimed them as their own; they belonged to the village ... People moved freely; there were no fenced-off areas; there were no army or police in the village'.

In 1997, the Zimbabwean stock market and economy had crashed, reducing the potency of the currency by 72% (Mlambo, 2014). The following year, food prices soared by 21% within four months, sparking protests and strikes across Harare. In 1999, the first opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) came on board Zimbabwe politics. In 2000, following ZANU-PF's near defeat by the Tsvangirai-led MDC, hundreds of farms belonging to white settlers across the country were seized by the ZANU-PF and its cohorts. This worsened the food crisis and unemployment in the country. Then, the Zimbabwean government, in 2005, embarked on the destruction of tens of thousands of stalls and homes said to belong to

MDC supporters in Harare. In this operation code-named *Murambatsvina* (“Throw out the trash”), over 700,000 people lost their homes and means of livelihood (Nichols, 2012). Meanwhile, Zimbabwe had pulled out of the Commonwealth in 2003, after being suspended by the latter from its councils for high levels of electoral irregularities and violence. Besieged by local and international economic sanctions, Zimbabwe was hit hard by a hyperinflation that topped 1000%, by May 2006.

Meanwhile, the South African mining conglomerate, De Beers, which had been prospecting in Marange, discovered alluvial diamond deposits in 2001, with only 10% of gem quality stones. But apparently due to the violent farm invasions and the continued lawlessness in Zimbabwe—as well as the 2001-2003 period of crash in the prize of pre-crush diamond (US\$12 per carat)—De Beers failed to renew its exploration certificate from the Zimbabwean government when it expired in 2003 (*The Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe*, 2011). Thereafter, the UK-registered company, African Consolidated Resources (ACR) obtained exclusive rights from Zimbabwean government to mine the Marange fields. In June, 2006, it hit huge deposits of diamond and reported the find to the government, as the law required. Indiscreetly, the government responded by declaring the fields open to anyone interested in searching for diamonds. Within few months, the number of artisanal miners grew from about 150 to between 15,000 and 20,000. The so-called ‘diamond rush’ had begun in earnest. But the government soon changed its mind; on November 21, 2006, it clamped down on the illegal miners in a nationwide police operation (*Chikorokoza Chapera*—“No more panning”). This operation was marked by human rights violations, corruption, extortion and smuggling, involving the police. Things only grew worse such that by October, 2008, 35,000 people from many countries thronged Marange for illegal diamond dealings (Partnership Africa Canada, 2012; Mupfumi, 2017).

On 27 October, 2008, Operation *Hakudzokwi Kumunda* (“You will not come back from the fields alive”) was unleashed on the artisanal miners of Marange in a joint action of the police and the Zimbabwean national army. From land and the air, the military surrounded the miners and opened fire on them, as they took to their heels in terror. There are reports of the police unleashing security dogs that attacked and mauled some of the miners to a critical point. Many were maimed by beating. About 15,000 illegal miners were rounded up on that day. In the end, at least 214 miners (eyewitnesses said about 500)

were killed and several mortally injured (Partnership Africa Canada, 2010). This operation gave the military absolute control in Marange, control which they fully deployed for personal gain over the next decade. From then on, Marange diamond fields became synonymous with violence and lawlessness. Different players, ranging from the army generals, central intelligence officers, the police, company executives and state officials, to ordinary citizens, benefitted from the illicit activities that ensued: panning; smuggling; extortion; abuse; forced labour; bribery; rape; robbery; and killing. In all these, the police and the army were particularly indicted. It was reported that torture camps were found in Marange fields, where panners were beaten and detained by the police and the military, who would subsequently recruit the captives to dig for diamonds (Howard, 2015).

The diamond strike came in the nick of time as the means by which the Mugabe regime would sustain itself in power. Mugabe used a combination of patronage, fear and militarisation of the country to subdue opposition. There was absolute lack of transparency at all levels of government, and in the diamond industry across Zimbabwe. Some ministers and military officers became notorious in the Marange story for the part they played in fleecing their country of its diamonds and the ensuing revenues. Obert Mpofu, who was the Minister of Mines in the peak of the diamond rush, became super-rich by granting mining concessions to all and sundry, without any attempt to investigate the antecedents and capabilities of the applicants (Partnership Africa Canada, 2012). Others include General Constantine Chiwenga, the ambitious army chief; Emmerson Mnangagwa, the wealthy defense minister at the time; Gideon Gono, former governor of the Reserve Bank, and the powerful police chief, Augustine Chihuri (*Zimbabwe Independent*, December 16, 2016). Other high ranking members of the military appropriated different mines across Zimbabwe and ran them as private property. The River Ranch, which lies close to the Zimbabwe-South Africa border, was regarded for years as Solomon Mujuru’s mine. Former Air Vice Marshal Robert Mhlanga, who used to be Mugabe’s personal pilot, became Chairman of Mbada Investments, one of the major mining firms in operation. Lovemore Kurotwi, a retired army colonel, used to run Marange Resources, which was 100% government-owned. After him, its CEO was Tshinga Dube, another retired colonel and former head of Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI). Sino-Zim was a partnership between the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), a key Zimbabwean security agency, and the Chinese (Partnership Africa Canada, 2012). Due to lack of accountability and transparency,

the diamonds simply disappeared, frittered away by private airplanes to other parts of the world, including Dubai, China, India, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Europe, while Marange lay in ruins.

Marange diamonds are exceptional both in quality and in quantity. Alluvial in nature, they have been estimated to be worth up to US\$800 billion, which can reliably fund Zimbabwe's annual national budget for the next 80 years, if judiciously managed (Nichols, 2012). According to Partnership Africa Canada (2010), some of the stones were the size of pineapples. Experts believe that Marange alone furnishes about 20-30% of the world's rough diamond supply. The carats per hundred tonnes (CPHT) of Marange diamonds—that is, the measurement used in determining the lucrativeness of diamond deposits—have never been seen elsewhere. They are as high as 4,000 CPHT, over 80 times a normal artisanal deposit. In spite of all these facts, the promises held by Marange to turn Zimbabwe's fortune around are far from being realised, due to greed, corruption and unbridled materialism. In the next section, attempt is made to examine the concept of corporate social responsibility, in order to demonstrate the extent to which the vulnerable groups in and around Marange were ostensibly left to their own fate, with the riches of their land plundered and taken to foreign lands.

Corporate social responsibility in Marange

Before Mugabe's revelation cited earlier, there were about seven private mining firms in and around Marange: Gyae Nyame Resources, Kusena Diamonds, Jinan Investment, Mbada Diamonds, Anjin, Marange Resources and Diamond Mining Corporation. They came into partnership with the government, with an agreement to split the earnings down the middle, and later became consolidated as the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC).

Mr. Mugabe's testimony might be lightly dismissed as mere political rhetoric devoid of credibility; and one might, for the sake of argument, entertain such suspicion. However, a clear evidence of this diamond 'curse' is the actual debilitating impact on the local communities of Chiadzwa—the vulnerable groups, including women and children, that have suffered the adverse effects of the mining activities. The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) is a non-governmental organisation that promotes environmental justice in Zimbabwe. It has been very resourceful by producing an online video that provides a firsthand insight on the sufferings of these host communities. In this 32-minute documentary by ZELA

(2015), Maruwa Jena, a female resident of Hot Springs, and a member of the Save/Odzi Community Development Trust, states flatly: "Mining [has] increased poverty in our community. Our lifestyle was better before the mining companies came. It is now even worse."

Companies are required by law to obtain certification from the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) of Zimbabwe, after a duly completed onsite environmental impact assessment (EIA). This requirement is global and very essential because: "EIAs analyse the environmental baseline of a project affected area and determine potential impacts of the project on the area" (Center for Natural Resource Governance, 2015:23). But in Marange, companies commenced operations without such authorisation. Even when the EIA was later carried out by some of them, it was done without adequate input from the local communities, resulting in a peripheral assessment that did not capture the magnitude of the problems. One of the major negative impacts of mining in Marange is the pollution of the environment: the air and the rivers, together with the noise. In July 2012, ZELA, with the support of the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, performed a scientific analysis of water samples taken from Rivers Save and Odzi. The analysis showed evidence of the deposit of sewage, heavy metals and cancer-causing chemicals; there were, for example, high concentrations of iron, chromium and nickel—the main constituents of ferro-silicon, which is a chemical compound used for diamond extraction (Chimhete, 2012). These rivers, which had turned muddy, were the communities' only source of water. According to Celia Shuphani, a resident of Museye Community along the Save River, using the water had resulted in various illnesses requiring urgent medical attention among the villagers: the women complained of mysterious pain in the joints, while the children had rashes all over their bodies. There were also reports of miscarriages among expectant mothers, as well as cases of stillbirth in humans and animals (*Newsday*, October 6, 2014). Death of livestock was unusually high. Between 2010 and 2014, Mavis Karenyi, a cattle farmer along the Odzi River, lost her entire herd of 60 cattle. Others lost an average of 12 from their smaller herds.

Hundreds of families were hastily relocated to a wilderness that used to be a government farm, about 60km north of Marange. It is called the Arda Transau Relocation Area, just west of Mutare city. Due to the hasty manner in which the relocation was done, there were not enough houses for most, as many of the houses were yet completed. Unemployment was high

because among the relocated were former mining company workers and others who had other forms of employment back in Marange. Due to lack of water, some of the housewives, like Ethel Mapungu, could not grow fresh vegetables and fruits to support their families, as they did by the riverside back in Marange; even pasture for livestock was scanty. Food was also scarce, in spite of the effort of some of the companies to make some provisions. Those who wanted to grow food could not do so because neither seeds nor implements were forthcoming. Caiphas Mujuru, one of the Arda Transau residents interviewed by ZELA (2015), confirmed this fact.

The relocated families were, by nature, occupation, and culture, subsistence farmers; yet no land for cultivation was set aside for them, which resulted in “perennial food crisis” (Centre for Natural Resource Governance, 2015:18). Child labour became inevitable, as families now struggled to eke out a bare living by bringing all hands on deck; equally, early marriage thrived, as some families reduced the mouths to be fed by marrying their daughters off at the slimmest opportunity. Some lucky families were allocated the maximum compensation of one hectare of land; and a thousand US dollars, as ‘disturbance allowance’. According to Madebwe and Madebwe (2016), interviewing the residents was a herculean task; many of them refused to speak out for fear of being left out during future food supplies.

The recompenses made to the families were paltry in comparison to the properties left behind in Marange by some of them, which were much bigger and better developed (ZELA, 2015). For example, Mrs. Idah Kambeni and her large family of thirteen other wives and 70 children, had been evicted from their family land of thirty hectares. The family used to work so hard each year on the land to produce surplus food.

Even the allocated land was, strictly speaking, not a complete hectare, because, as Mujuru noted, it had the main family house, the kitchen, the toilet, cow stable, and goat stable; which meant that there was less land for cultivation. No valuation was carried out before the demolition of their homesteads in Marange, which would have given them some bargaining power for negotiating compensation.

Living conditions at Arda Transau were, indeed, quite harsh. Though promises of better livelihood were made prior to the relocations, these promises were shelved as soon as the evacuees reached the new destination, probably because both the government and the mining companies became overwhelmed by the sheer amount of resources required to meet the demands of the

resettlement. But, again, it shows the poverty of the planning itself, in terms of conception and implementation. The families were promised adequate and free water supply for domestic and irrigation purposes, as they had it where they came from. But they soon found themselves paying for water. Climax was finally attained when residents began to die at the average of 6 per day (ZELA, 2015). Here, Saunders and Nyamunda (2016: v) summarised with the apt observation that “the people of Marange ... have endured the most and gained the least from their rich lands.”

The Kimberley process

Zimbabwe is not the only African country to experience the diamond ‘curse’. Neither is it the first. In 2001, the United Nations (UN) banned diamond transactions in Liberia, citing the violence fuelled by the trade in illegally extracted stones in that country as reason (Ellis, 2005). Even earlier, precisely on June 12, 1998, the UN Security Council made a similar pronouncement on Angola, urging the boycott of its diamonds, as a way of controlling the ongoing civil war (Howard, 2015). Concurrently, worse diamond-funded conflicts were going on in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (1998-2003). Not only was diamond in itself the root cause of these conflagrations, it also provided funds for rebel armies, thereby prolonging the conflicts. It is estimated that by 2003, 3.7 million people had been killed in diamond-related conflicts across Africa, while 6.5 million others were displaced (Nichols, 2012). That year, officials of governments of diamond-producing African countries, together with representatives from both the world diamond market and civil society organisations, met in Kimberley, South Africa, to discuss the issues arising from diamond conflicts across Africa. The meeting led to the establishment of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)—an international institution that monitors the mining and trading of diamonds to ensure that ‘conflict’ or ‘blood’ diamonds (customarily found in Africa) do not find their way into the world diamond market.

Observers and critics alike believe that the KPCS has not been as effective in Zimbabwe as it had been elsewhere in Africa. For example, following the previous experience in other African countries prior to the discovery of diamonds in Marange, the KPCS defined ‘conflict diamonds’ (or ‘blood diamonds’) in terms of “those diamonds that are utilised by rebel movements and their allies to finance conflict directed at undermining legitimate governments” (Ntlhakana, 2015:62). But, as time would later reveal, this definition became too restrictive to accommodate the

peculiarities of Zimbabwe, where the government itself, rather than any rebel groups, was directly involved in illegal diamond dealings and atrocities against its civilian populations (Partnership Africa Canada, 2010, 2012).

In 2010, with the continuing human rights crimes in Marange by the military and the police, Farai Maguwu, the then director of Center for Research and Development in Harare, attempted to reach out to the KPCS. He requested a private meeting with Abbey Chikane, the South African pioneer president of the KPCS monitoring Zimbabwe at the time. But Chikane obliged Maguwu to meet him at a public venue in Mutare, with heavy presence of government agents. At the meeting, Maguwu handed over to Chikane on trust a formal document containing evidence of human rights abuse and illegal mining and trading activities in Marange involving the military. Chikane simply turned in the document to the Zimbabwean authorities, who promptly arrested and imprisoned Maguwu for forty days (Partnership Africa Canada, 2010).

Most importantly, even when the KPCS eventually saw the evidence of human rights abuse in Marange and declared a ban on its diamond in 2009, it unilaterally lifted the ban in 2011, without ascertaining that the Zimbabwean government had been compliant with its international minimum standards. The United States and the European Union responded by refusing assent to the KPCS verdict, since the human rights crimes were still in top gear at Marange. While some critics think the KPCS was at crossroads with a country like Zimbabwe, whose government had poor human rights records (for the diamond sale was going on illegally, anyway), others wonder how and why such a well-constituted institution of international standing as the KPCS could have been infiltrated by the political interests of the ZANU, in Zimbabwe (Mtisi, 2016). In all, it seems to be widely agreed that the Kimberley Process is a step in the right direction, as it has helped cut global trade in blood diamond from 15% to about 4% (Howard, 2015).

Some practical considerations

The first things to crumble in the Arda Transau relocations were the culture and social life of the people of Marange. African communities are, by nature, traditionally oriented towards the extended family, clan/kin, village and town. This creates in each person a sense of bonding that gets consolidated from one level to the next (Menkiti, 1984; Aja, 1998). The relocations do not appear to have taken this into consideration; rather, the exercise seems to have been done haphazardly. People were dumped next to others

that may not be directly related to them. With the reported housing deficit in Arda Transau, it is clear that the natural extended families, clans or kin, and villages that originally existed back in Chiadzwa have been lost forever, or, at best, become fragmented. Second, the financial authority that parents exercise over the family tends to cajole the children into submissiveness and good behaviour. Accordingly, when children are forced to fend for themselves, the resultant false sense of physical and financial freedom often produces a concomitant loss of the sense of the moral authority which their parents are supposed to represent in the home. Child labour invariably exposes children to every conceivable hazard—psychological, physical and moral. Meanwhile, even if the labour is done after school, it is possible that such children would not concentrate enough to do well in school. They develop an abysmal sense of self-esteem, and, with time, drop out of school altogether. Third, if, as reported of Marange, underage girls are forced into marriage due to inability of the parents to give them adequate educational training, what is the guarantee that this vacuum would be filled where they are going? How could such a girl even reach the realisation that there is a lacuna in her life? The vicious cycle of poverty would continue *ad infinitum* and, with time, only get worse.

As such, a way out of such a dire situation is for the new government of Zimbabwe to ensure that the right thing is done henceforth, by providing the basic necessities for the relocated families, so that they can take over their lives. The current CSR policy on Marange has fared far below basic expectations, and, certainly, is not working. If it were, these communities would not continue to attract global concern and attention. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (No. 20), which was recently amended in 2013, spells out the obligation of the government to “protect and enhance the rights of the people, particularly women, to equal opportunities in development and ... ensure that local communities benefit from the resources in their areas” (cited in Center for Natural Resource Governance, 2015:20). This is a good starting point for remedying the Marange anomalies. The new government of Zimbabwe, under Emerson Mnangagwa, must implement this recommendation to the letter, with every sense of responsibility. It must put this into practical effect by being at alert to monitor the diamond mining process all the way to revenue inflow, in order to generate enough funds that can be used to extend reasonable compensation to the evicted families, who have continued to languish in Arda Transau Relocation Area (see Chiketo, 2018).

Now that the government has regained full control of its diamond mining industry through the Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC), it cannot afford to shelve its responsibilities towards its citizenry by looking to foreign companies; neither should it abandon the country's heritage to these foreigners, who are in Zimbabwe only to do business and rake in as much profit as possible. Rather, the government must effectively monitor the entire process of diamond production, and ensure that adequate revenues and taxes are remitted to the coffers. Even in well-regularised economies, experience shows that nobody enjoys paying taxes, meaning that the relevant authorities must be careful to monitor the process and sanction defaulting entities and individuals. Failure of the Zimbabwean authorities to monitor the activities of companies in their country gave the companies huge advantages, at the expense of the local economy. Zimbabwe can garner a lot of lessons from Botswana. For instance, it can do much more than sell rough diamond; it can add value to its production by embarking on massive diversification of the production process, all the way from mining, through cutting and polishing, to exporting finished products. By increasing the value chain of its diamond production in this way, Zimbabwe would not only broaden its income base, but also create the much needed jobs for its citizenry.

Conclusion

Mining companies can do nothing without the support and protection of state authorities. That is why they have taken advantage of the ineptitude so far exhibited by these authorities. Yet they can only operate on the terms of the government. To this extent, partnering foreign companies is not such a bad idea, in itself; all that is required is for government to leverage on its powers, with sincere commitment to the enforcement of extant rules of engagement, strengthening them wherever necessary. Through a well-articulated partnership agreement with the De Beers conglomerate, Botswana is now reported to have gone as far as acquiring company shares beyond its borders (Center for Natural Resource Governance, 2013). In all, transparency should be the watchword of the government in all its actions and policies. This is the only way it can regain the trust of the people, who can then be sympathetic with their government in times of difficulty. More critically, Zimbabweans need to see—not just to be told—that the government is for them, and not just for a select group of ZANU stalwarts.

In spite of the past, however, Zimbabweans are a resolute people; there are still good reasons to look to the future with optimism. Zimbabwe remains one of the most endowed nations on earth, with huge deposits of

alluvial diamond and other minerals, such as gold, chrome and platinum. Zimbabwe used to be the food basket of the southern African region. Its agriculture sector, which has been left untapped since 2000, is, thus, another source of hope, in terms of food, employment and revenue; and there are indications that the country's external debts may be expunged once the leadership problem is sorted out and new international partnerships are formed (Rotberg, 2011). For this reason, Zimbabwe has what it takes—and what it needs—to turn things around for the better. As a new government has just been installed, many business interests are keeping Zimbabwe in focus. While waiting outside and within the borders for signs of real change ushering in an era of visionary, committed and purposeful leadership, these business prospects still believe strongly in the potentials nature has bestowed on Zimbabwe.

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