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Women struggles and large-scale diamond mining in Marange, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The arrival of large-scale diamond mining activities brought hope and enthusiasm to many women within and around Marange, Mutare District, Zimbabwe. Ordinary Zimbabweans believed that diamond mining would transform the lives of the region's inhabitants. However, such anticipated transformation turned into rage and despair, and presented numerous challenges to residents, particularly women. This article examines the impacts mining activities have had on women in Eastern Zimbabwe, and explores their struggles.

1. Introduction

The arrival of large-scale mining often leads to tensions and contestations among various groups with vested interests. As such, much scholarship has emphasised the importance of equitable socio-economic development and reducing environmental threats (Bryceson and Jønsson, 2010; Hilson and Macanachie, 2008; Bebbington et al., 2008a); negotiating resource governance and territorial rights (Haalboom, 2012; Bebbington, 2012; Hilson and Macanachie, 2008); and complex socio-economic environmental impacts of mining activities on local communities (Bebbington and Williams, 2008; Carrington et al., 2010; Bech et al., 1997). Existing studies on women and mining have focused on empowerment and gender mainstreaming (Tallichet, 2000; Scheyvens and Lagisa, 1998; Lahiri-Dutt, 2006), participation (Yakovleva, 2007; Werthmann, 2009; Bashwira et al., 2014), psychological well-being (Lovell and Jennifer, 2010), environmental justice (Bose, 2004), and negotiations with mining companies (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). There is, however, little attention paid to how mining affects women (Jenkins, 2014) and their struggles. This article attempts to bridge this gap by presenting an in-depth analysis of how diamond mining in Marange, Mutare District, Zimbabwe, is affecting women residing in adjacent communities. In particular, the analysis spans from the arrival of large-scale diamond mining in 2009 up to 2015.

In 1990, the Zimbabwe Geological Survey identified more than 500 individual deposits of base metals and industrial minerals in Zimbabwe (UNDP, 2009). In comparative terms, mining is one of the largest sources of export earnings in the country. However, extensive mine development has been curtailed by underinvestment in mineral exploitation and production. Historically, in Zimbabwe, mining has spawned urbanisation, economic growth and prosperity (Kamete, 2012). The spin offs from mining manifest in more than 20 mining towns in the country. Between 1996 and 2001, however, about 37 mining companies closed their operations (Kanyenze et al., 2011: 178). Many of these once vibrant mining towns degenerated into ghost towns, closures which have adversely affected communities which have traditionally relied on the industry for their livelihoods.

Whilst much of the research work on Marange diamonds has focused on transparency, human rights and resource flows (Towriss, 2013; Maguwu, 2013; Global Witness, 2012; Nyamunda and Mukwambo, 2012), this paper examines how women in the districts of Buhera, Chipinge, Chimanimani and Mutare are being affected by the Marange's large-scale mining operations. This impetus for the investigation is the conception that women are disproportionately affected by many of the negative impacts of mining (Jenkins, 2014). The paper examines evolving women's agency in its efforts to explore the negative impacts of mining. Before concluding, I examine the reasons behind the persistence of women's struggles in these districts.

Data for this paper were collected during the periods February–March 2014 and April–May 2015. The data were generated through focus group discussions with 40 women (10 per mining community) and in-depth interviews with 10 local government officials from the respective Rural District Councils (RDCs). The focus group

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discussions were conducted at Hot Springs (for Chimanimani District), Birchenough Bridge (for Buhera District and Chipinge District) and in Mutare (for Mutare District). Most of the women who participated in the focus group discussions are members of community and civil society interventions which advocate for fair and just mining practices. Focus group discussions primarily focused on the impacts of mining on women, women's struggles and women's agency gained through mining. In-depth interviews with local government officials explored issues such as relations between mining companies and local communities, impacts of mining on women, and reasons for women's struggles. The key research questions which guided the research were as follows:

(a) What are the negative impacts of mining activities on women?
(b) What explains these impacts?
(c) What are the responses of women to such impacts?
(d) What are the relations like between women, mining companies and government institutions?

2. Women, mining and development

The role of women in mining is largely under-recognised, under-theorised and under-investigated (Jenkins, 2014), despite the growth of nefarious mining activities that impact negatively on their livelihoods, particularly in the Global South. Examining the nexus between women and mining activities, therefore, requires closer examination of women as mineworkers; the gendered impacts of mining, and specifically the disproportionately negative impacts on women; their changing roles and identities in communities affected by mining; and gendered inequalities in relation to the benefits of mining (Ibid). Such analysis is vital in facilitating the development of mining operations that are just, inclusive and responsive to women needs and interests.

Women pursue work in both the artisanal small-scale mining sector and at large-scale mining corporations. Here, I focus on the latter, in which women participate in a wide range of activities across the globe, although there has been a tendency to label this participation as insignificant (Lahiri-Dutt and Macintyre, 2006). Women's employment in large-scale extractive companies is low and rarely exceeds 10 percent of the workforce (Eftimie et al., 2009). In the Global South, what is prevalent is the employment of women in ancillary and administrative positions (Chaloping-March, 2006; Lahiri-Dutt, 2006).

Research points to women bearing a disproportionate share of mining's negative impacts. Specifically, a number of studies show that the effects of environmental degradation are more felt by women who experience additional pressures and time burdens as food security declines, sources of unpolluted water dwindle and more time is spend on fetching water and firewood (Bose, 2004; Isla, 2002; Eftimie et al., 2009). Domestic and sexual violence against women is also a common occurrence in mining communities. Men's greater access to cash through mine work and compensation received in cases of displacement (Simatauw, 2009) leads to higher incidences of alcohol consumption and may lead to higher levels of domestic violence (Byford, 2002; Hinton et al., 2006; Perks, 2011). The influx of migrants working in mining fuels prostitution, spawning additional social 'ills' such as child sex, sexual violence and harassment, rising incidences of HIV/AIDS and breakdowns of marriages.

Land is a vital resource for the inhabitants of rural communities. The arrival of large-scale mining is often associated with community displacement and disruptions to the livelihoods of these people. This community displacement places additional burdens on women when it comes to community building and maintaining cohesion, leading to social conflicts within communities and families (Jenkins, 2014; Scheyvens and Lagisa, 1998). Displacements further impact women by decreasing food security (Jenkins, 2014).

The changing gender relations and identities in mining communities often manifest through women as sex workers; women's changing socio-economic status; women's organisations; and women's activism against extractive activities (Scheyvens and Lagisa, 1998; Byford, 2002; Carino, 2002; Macdonald, 2002; Jenkins, 2014). The actual and potential benefits of mining are unequally distributed with regards to gender (Jenkins, 2014). As Eftimie et al. (2009: 3) point out, '[the] evidence increasingly demonstrates that in general, women are more vulnerable to risks [of mining activities] with little access to benefits'.

3. Diamond mining in eastern Zimbabwe

The discovery of large diamond fields in Eastern Zimbabwe in 2006 brought with it rays of hope in a country plagued by socio-economic and political catastrophe. At first, people mined informally, during which time, immense positive changes were observable in local communities. Noticeable changes included the building of modern houses (migrating from dagga houses to bricks and asbestos), the acquisition of household assets (livestock, ploughs, scotch carts among others), weddings and marriages, and purchase of cars. These changes were evident in the districts of Buhera, Chipinge, Chimanimani and Mutare.

Diamonds are mined in the Marange area which falls under Mutare District, about 90 km from Mutare City. The other three districts which are being affected by these mining operations are Buhera, Chipinge and Chimanimani. Marange became the focus of a special monitoring agreement under the Kimberley Process (KP) in November 2009, when state-sponsored violence and other irregularities compromised Zimbabwe's compliance with KP minimum requirements (PAC, 2012: 7). The country received KP certification in order to sell Marange diamonds in March 2011, despite contestations among other KP members. The major diamond companies operating in the region include Anjin (a Chinese company), Mbada Diamonds, Marange Resources, and Diamond Mining Company (Dubai Based Company). The Government of Zimbabwe, through the Zimbabwe Mining Development Cooperation (ZMDC), entered into joint venture agreements – 50/50 shareholding – with Mbada and Diamond Mining Company, whilst Marange Resources is 100 percent owned by ZMDC (Zimbabwe Parliament, 2013). Further, the government owns 10 percent of shares in Anjin, again through ZMDC, whilst the Zimbabwe Defence Industries owns 40 percent (PAC, 2012). In Chimanimani DTZ-OZGEO, a joint venture between a Russian company and the Development Trust of Zimbabwe is mining diamonds at Chesterfield.

The above named companies are fronted by what Partnership Africa Canada has described as 'shady individuals and fugitives' (PAC, 2010: 5). The politics of rents, patronage and access to resources is closely knit in Zimbabwe, and is at the centre of diamond mining companies operating in Manicaland Province. Mining companies in Marange are directed by army generals and appointed officials who front Zimbabwe's political elite (Dawson and Kelsall, 2012). Post-2000, this has been common, as the country's elites have shown 'coercion and brazen expropriation and extortion of property in clear violation of existing law and practice' (Sachikonye, 2011: 40). Such political construction determines who has the right to mine, what laws are applied, and who can question the miners. As such, politics around diamond mining determine who benefits from mining and, of interest here, shape women struggles.

4. Women struggles in mining communities

Mining communities are those affected by or whose geographical location is nearer to mineral extraction and/or exploration activities. Various sections of the four districts of Mutare, Buhera, Chipinge and Chimanimani house what can be considered mining communities. Diamond mining activities have far-reaching political, economic, cultural moral, as well as epidemiological, demographic and environmental implications for the Marange landscape (Nyamunda and Mukwambo, 2012). Focusing on displacement and relocation, prostitution and violence, and environmental degradation and livelihoods, the article examines how women in Eastern Zimbabwe are affected by local diamond mining activities. I primarily focus on collective challenges repeatedly raised by women interviewed.

4.1. Displacement and relocation

Stories of mining-induced relocations show despair; breakdown of emotions and the significant alteration of society. In particular, entire communities have been moved to accommodate mining activities, breaking and disrupting the social fabric, placing the burden of beginning a new home on women. Establishing new relations and cultivating new livelihood, alongside child care duties, burden women even further. In Chimanimani, people were resettled at Spring Field, where there are no schools and health facilities, making these tasks even more challenging. In fact, this is not uncommon: accommodating mining activities in Eastern Zimbabwe has often led to communities being relocated to places without key socio-economic infrastructure. The absence of such infrastructure (for instance, schools, clinics, housing and shopping centres) increases the burden on women to find alternatives.

The largest relocation took place in Marange when about 1000 families were displaced and resettled in Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) Transau. Women who were relocated pointed out that:

> We were given peripheral attention as if we have no voice and those who spoke on our behalf in fact silenced our voices. The documentation process did not include us; it only included our husbands. Negotiations for compensation were a male's issue. In fact, we were demeaned as if we are not humans. How can one be removed from a place she has resided for all her life without engaging her? It was painful and traumatic experience which we have never imagined in all our life. Our lives have changed, and we will never be the same again.[1]

The cumulative impact of women's absence from negotiations is affecting women's lives at ARDA Transau. One relocated women narrated their [women] ordeal:

> The relocation robbed us our land and livelihood sources. Chiadzwa forests provided us with easy access to firewood and edible fruits. Here [ARDA Transau], there is overpopulation and deforestation as we have resorted to cutting down trees and selling firewood for a livelihood. There is rapid siltation in rivers resulting from deforestation. We wake up with our school children before 4am to steal firewood from far afield. After fetching firewood, the long journey home begins. Our children store the firewood in classrooms whilst attending classes; before taking the firewood home after school. In Chiadzwa, we never experienced this as firewood was readily available.

For those who have remained in the Marange area, finding firewood can now be a challenge, as most forests communities have relied on have been fenced. Women are now forced to cover longer distances in order to reach forests which are not fenced. In particular, women from Marange presented that:

> The area now under mining was a conserved forest for grazing and firewood. We are now resorting to using cow dung and hedge. The remaining forests are very far taking 5 hours or more for someone to walk to and from. For instance people from Betera relied on firewood from Shonje forest which is now under mining. Instead they are now going to Makate Mountain [in Mukwada area] which is about 10 km from Betera fetching firewood. There is now widespread deforestation due to overconcentration of people on one area. This is how we are suffering as women. In addition to fetching firewood, we have to fetch water from long distances as well.[2]

As pointed in preceding paragraphs, women were not consulted during negotiations over compensation and relocation. This in part has created a severe housing shortage at ARDA Transau, mainly because 1000 relocated families were each allocated a four bedroom house despite the number of children and wives one has. The housing shortage has affected more than 60 families who are in polygamous marriages. As such, women's privacy has been severely compromised, a point elaborated on by one interviewee:

> My privacy and dignity as a married woman has been severely compromised. I do not have a place where I call my bedroom. Where do you expect me to even store my undergarments? To add some more bedrooms, we have partitioned dining rooms with curtains to accommodate extra wives. We sleep using a rotation system, in which children regardless of age, sex and marital status share a bedroom with their father's wives where the father slept the previous night with his wife. So every night, everyone is shifting. Is this human?

Many interviewed women argued that because of the housing crisis, some children have decided to drop out of school and look for jobs elsewhere. These adolescent children find it difficult to share a bedroom with their father's wives. By nature, women require 'their' space and privacy in order for them to be comfortable. Women argued that the housing situation is emotionally-draining and destroying respect among family members.

4.2. Prostitution and violence against women

Mining has brought with it migrants who work in diamond mining firms and reside in local communities. Oftentimes, these migrants leave behind their families, prompting them to engage prostitutes. Violence against women can be physical, economic and emotional as it was pointed out:

> Before mining, as women, we had honour and respect in this community and within our families. Our children were getting married in line with customary procedures such as paying bride price first. It was a marvel for us as women as that showed how successful and fruitful our efforts of raising the girl child were. However, with the arrival of immigrants working in diamond mines, things have drastically changed. Our children are no longer getting married. Instead they have turned into prostitution. Such prostitution affects us in two ways. One is that the society in general and men in particular traumatise us saying women have failed to take control of the girl child. Second is that these children often get HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies with the burden of caring for them when sick and grandchildren resting on our shoulders.[3]

[1] Interview with women relocated from Marange to ARDA Transau.

[2] Interview with women from Marange community.

[3] Interview with women from Chimanimani community.

Rural business centres such as Hot Springs, Mukwada, Bambazonke, Mutsago and Birchenough Bridge are Eastern Zimbabwe's hotspots for prostitution. Based on estimates provided by interviewees, across the study sites, there have at least 100 divorces related to and driven by allegations of prostitution. Other women interviewed expressed preference for employed men with money over unemployed men. A case in point was in Muedzengwa village in Bocha where a man reportedly died due to stress after his spouse left him for a migrant mine worker. Prostitution and extramarital affairs are evidenced by the birth of Chinese babies witnessed in Hot Springs (2 children), Odzi (1 child) and Mafude (1 child), in some cases, even to married women. Interviewees pointed out that woman are also destroying their marriages because of extramarital affairs with migrants. At the same time, men are also cohabiting, turning their backs on their own marriages.

In the four study districts, it was established that young women are vulnerable to prostitution. The most affected age group is between 12 and 16 years; many in this age group elect to drop out of school in pursuit of marriage or prostitution.[4] In Chimanimani's Ward 5 (Hot Springs) there are over 40 girls who have dropped out of school in order to marry. Of these marriages, about three-quarters have broken down. In Ward 20 of the same district, there are about 30 underage (16 years) girls who have been impregnated and left to raise their new born babies alone. Prostitution is exposing young women to unwanted pregnancies. There were five cases of young women who aborted and died in Chimanimani and Mutare between 2009 and 2014. A village head interviewed in Chimanimani District explained that 'most of the children are getting married but they do not understand what life and marriage entails'. A 15 year old woman engaged in prostitution activities and based at Birchenough Bridge reflected on about how the sex trade functions in an interview:

> I was in Form 3 when I first interfaced my friends who had dropped out of school. They introduced me to some migrants working in diamond mines. I realised that migrants had a lot of money and that my friends were making money. I decided to leave school and join them. However prostitution is not easy, sometimes it looks like I am being raped. This is all for the sake of money; US$200 the whole night and US$20 short time. The network of young girls involved in this business is very large; we are present at many business centres in this region. Five of my friends recently tested positive to HIV/AIDS so I have to be extremely careful. I cannot even go back home because my parents had a big quarrel over my decision to be a prostitute. My father accused my mother of being complicity in my new 'trade' though it's purely not true. In fact, my mother's marriage is suffering due to my personal decision.

4.3. Environmental degradation and livelihoods

The impact of mining on the environment often alters and undercuts livelihood strategies and sources respectively (Lu and Lora-Wainwright, 2014). Livelihoods are a function of assets and structures, and a source of subsistence, income, identity and meaning (Bebbington et al., 2008b). In Chimanimani; due to mining effluent from diamond mining, the Nyabamba, Nyahode, Rusitu and Odzi Rivers have been severely polluted, disturbing fishing, and adversely impairing the quality of water used for drinking and washing. Chimanimani RDC officials noted that more than 100 cattle have died due to sludge and water pollution in the Nyanyadzi River alone (Muchadenyika et al., 2015). In Buhera and Chipinge, about 500 cattle have died as a result of drinking polluted water from Save River (ibid). Mutare Rural District Council and Environmental Management Agency tried to engage mining companies to address problems with pollution in Save and Odzi Rivers. But these efforts were met with resistance from politicians who protect the diamond companies. The death of livestock is changing how women engage in peasant farming, as one woman in Mangwadza, Buhera District, pointed out in an interview:

> I used to have six cattle and it was very convenient for me when ploughing. However, all my cattle died due to drinking polluted water along Save River. Now I am resorting to using the hoe instead of the ox-drawn plough, which is laborious. I have since cut my hactrage for farming which is seriously affecting my household's food security chances. As women, we are the majority engaged in peasant farming and we are suffering from the situation caused by these mining companies.

In ARDA Transau, more than 40 cattle, 50 goats and six donkeys have been trampled by National Railways of Zimbabwe trains as there is no fence to separate the settlement and the railway line (Muchadenyika et al., 2015). Essentially, the relocated families face significant livelihood risks for which they are neither prepared nor aided by the government to address. In Chimanimani's Ward 20, the local irrigation scheme has been affected, and consequently, harvested beans are showing dimple-like defects and tomatoes are turning rubber-like. The irrigation scheme supports 89 farmers but most attribute these problems to the water drawn being polluted.

In Chimanimani, before being displaced by mining operations at Chesterfield, women grew maize, beans, potatoes on rich soils with reliable rains. In particular, women were harvesting an average of 5-7 tonnes per agricultural season. These potatoes were sold to markets in Mutare and Harare with women themselves arguing that they had income security from agricultural produce. Further, these potatoes were critical in forming part of the balanced diet for families. However, relocation compromised the ability of women to earn income from peasant farming; it is a matter of starting all over again. The District Administrator for Chimanimani pointed out that:

> Mining operations have robbed communities of prime agricultural land where their livelihoods were guaranteed and have been relocated to new places where starting life all over hits women hardest as they oversee the setting up of a new home in a situation where they are psychologically devastated with resettling and coping with new neighbours and environments.

5. Evolving women's agency

Women are responding to the negative impacts of mining in a variety of ways, including sporadic resistance to unjust mining practices. With support from civil society (in particular, Action Aid International Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association), women are engaging the relevant government stakeholders and voicing their concerns. For instance, the alternative mining indabas organised by civil society have provided women with forums to raise their concerns and engage senior government officials. It would seem that civil society actors have managed to raise awareness among women on women rights in mining communities. With such awareness and information, there are signs that women's agency is evolving in the four districts affected by diamond mining. However, this agency seems to be isolated, uncoordinated and unstructured.

5.1. Against prospecting

Under the current mining framework in Zimbabwe, there is no legal requirement for those undertaking prospecting to

[4] This is probably because of the experimentation that comes with adolescence.

acknowledge and cater to local communities and people. In fact, prospectors dig and map areas without engaging local communities and structures. In the event that locals question prospecting activities, prospectors often say 'we are coming from the top'.[5] A case in point is William and Mark Company which was carrying out prospecting activities in Chimanimani without engaging the local community. One woman who first confronted the company and mobilised the community against the prospector explained in an interview that:

> In August 2013, William and Mark Company camped in Odzi River prospecting about 400–500 metres from my homestead. They were destroying people's fields at will. My first impression was that relocation was near. I approached my neighbour who was a man so as to confront the miners. The man said 'we will die'. In the process of thinking, I gathered courage and confronted the prospectors asking 'who gave you the permission to be where you are?' They said 'we are from the top'. The prospectors were accompanied by two police officers and two soldiers. They camped at high levels while women had a bathing place downstream. We argued very furiously about the dangers of what they wanted to do to the local community. Hearing the noise, other community members joined and suddenly we became angry to the point of being violent. The prospectors sensed the community mood and took all their equipment back. After the confrontation, they disappeared within days as they could not even face traditional leaders who I had alerted.

5.2. No town without us

At the height of diamond mining boom in 2013, the Government of Zimbabwe and local mining companies proposed to build a town in Hot Springs. The proposed town would house the majority of mine workers who were residing considerable distances from the diamond fields. Proponents of the town wanted to relocate the rural families already residing in Hot Springs. The reasons behind the planned relocation were presented as follows: the area had diamonds which therefore justified the building of a town. The community demanded that a community member accompany the miners to verify whether there were, in fact, diamonds at the site. During the meetings at which the proposed town project was discussed, community representatives claimed that they have resided in the area for more than half a century and would therefore require due processes to be followed. Questions such as: 'How do you develop a town when there are diamonds?', 'Who is to stay in the town?', and 'Are we not human beings who constitute town residents?' were asked.[6]

Community representatives argued that politicians and mining company officials wanted to convert Hot Springs into an urban settlement for two reasons: (1) to house the large workforce operating in Marange; and (2) to take advantage of the scenic view which Hot Springs offers. Unconfirmed reports indicate that Marange Diamonds had agreed to pay US$45,000 per month to the Chimanimani RDC, the local authority responsible for the town. One woman, now an activist, questioned in the first meeting, the logic of the relocation, unable to see any benefit for the community. She specifically accused the RDC officials for not consulting local communities first. During the second meeting, an emotionally-charged woman went as far to remove her clothes in agitation over the relocation proposals. The community reached a consensus that the next meeting, everyone should come armed with a weapon – hoes, axes, or picks – in response to one individual's insistence that 'we are not for violence but let's be prepared'. The plans to build the town have, however, since been abandoned.

5.3. 'Save our environment'

As explained in Section 4.3, there is massive and unchecked pollution generated by mining companies in Marange. It has been reported that Anjin, the Chinese company, is the main perpetrator. In 2013, the company disposed the contents of its portable toilets in the Odzi River. Anjin employed over 1200 workers, which meant that the raw sewage disposed of was significant in quantity. Because the community was beginning to gain some understanding of its rights, a group of women consulted the local female parliamentarian. After consultation, the group engaged the Environmental Management Agency, leading to Anjin being fined US$45,000. However, the community was not satisfied with this sum, arguing that Anjin was fined but 'what about us who are at the receiving end of pollution'.[7]

Near Changadzi River, a 'mining consortium' started operations without informing the community. A mining camp was set up, explaining to the local community that it was planning to mine diamonds, despite the community's querying of the proposition. The community engaged the Environmental Management Agency, and the miners were fined US$6,000. The miners finally disbanded operations.

At the confluence of Singwizi and Save Rivers, mine effluent is causing cattle to be trapped in the mud. As livestock is an important asset locally, the community pressured the Diamond Mining Company to consider measures to ensure that livestock is not endangered. This led the company to hire security guards, who are tasked with preventing such incidences.

5.4. Community share ownership trusts/schemes

The Government of Zimbabwe, through General Notice 114 of 2011, mandates mining companies to award at least 10 percent of shares to local communities through the Community Share Ownership Trust/Schemes (CSOTs). The main function of Community Share Ownership Trusts is to spearhead development activities in communities affected by mining. This is done in line with the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, which compels mining companies to cede 51 percent shareholding to indigenous Zimbabweans. However, critics have argued that the indigenisation programme is non-transformational, as it does not create wealth but rather substitute foreign ownership with a small group of local and politically connected cronies. In particular, it has been argued that Zimbabwe's economic and political institutions are extractive as they only serve the interests of the elite, at the expense of local populations (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013; Saunders, 2008). In other words, the Indigenous and Economic Empowerment Act does not promote 'investment and innovation', as investors are wary of plunder and takeover by political elites when the investment becomes successful (Mills, 2014: 164–165).

Nonetheless, women' agency in the four districts under study has galvanised around Community Share Ownership Trusts and community-based organisations. Examples include the Zimunya-Marange CSOT, Save-Odzi Community Network Trust and Chiadzwa Community Development Trust (CCDT). Of these, only the Zimunya-Marange CSOT was established in accordance with the Indigenous and Economic Empowerment Act. The other two were established as voluntary community-based organisations.

[5] This was raised by women and officials from Rural District Councils interviewed.

[6] As raised by local people who attended the meeting.

[7] Interview with a women activist.

However, in either case, the role of women in community trusts is often muted as these schemes are not entirely meant to address women issues in mining communities. Further, the representation of women in these collective action organisations is weak in comparison to men. For instance, the Save-Odzi Community Network Trust has 15 trustees, only five of whom are women. The network is a community organisation representing the interests of communities affected by the downstream effects of diamond mining along Save and Odzi Rivers. But during focus group discussions, there were indications that participating women are actively involved in training and disseminating information to other women as part of the Save-Odzi Network.

The CCDT is a platform for women to raise their issues in the Marange mining community. Within CCDT, women serve as community monitors (monitoring women rights violations and taking women's issues to respective stakeholders), as well as train and recruit other community monitors. At the time of writing, Mutare RDC's position was that mining companies 'have contributed US$400,000 towards the Marange-Zimunya CSOT which communities are not happy with given that companies had pledged US$10 million dollars each'.[8] The share ownership scheme has no specific plans to address women's issues in mining communities.

In comparison, it would seem that women have more influence in voluntary community organisations than government created CSOTs. Presumably, this can be attributed to the top-down nature and composition of CSOTs.[9] However, community-based organisations often lack structured support for lobbying, advocacy and the overall ability to engage relevant stakeholders.

6. Explaining women struggles

Many believed that the arrival of formalised diamond mining would transform the country's socio-economic fortunes. It turned out to be the opposite. The looting and plundering of diamonds by Zanu-PF politicians and state security agents (Towriss, 2013) led to few benefitting from mining. Further, statutory institutions that in principle are meant to regulate diamond mining have also been implicated in the looting (Nyamunda and Mukwambo, 2012). Put differently, diamond mining is directed by and benefitting a small group of 'mafia-like' politicians, appointees and cronies. Based on this, Maguwu (2013: 77) has argued for 'a broader political transformation leading to establishment of an accountable, progressive and transparent government' as a way of improving transparency in Zimbabwe's diamond sector. Here, I argue that the relegation of local government institutions, government's attitude towards its citizens, and civil society and movements explain the persistence of women's struggles in mining areas.

6.1. The relegation of local government institutions

Local authorities, rural and urban, are custodians of all development activities in their areas of jurisdiction. In planning terms, they are the local planning authorities mandated with planning, development, management and governance functions (Mushamba, 2010). Under Zimbabwe's mining laws, local authorities are rendered powerless and useless. Put differently, local authorities have no planning powers in mining compounds, a development that can lead to spatial structures and service design that is not inclusive and sensitive to women's needs. According to Section 234 of the Mines and Minerals Act, the mining commissioner, 'who hardly knows anything about planning' (Kamete, 2012: 601), performs planning functions in mining settlements. The two planning authorities in mining settlements are the mining commissioner and mining company; local authorities have little or no say over matters.

In Zimbabwe, local authorities have no power to guide or pressure mining operations and address the subsequent impacts on local communities. As such, Mutare RDC officials raised that:

> Our role as Rural District Councils in mining operations is ceremonial and honorary. We cannot even lobby and advocate for the advancement of women in mining communities as we are just a bystander. In fact, mining companies do not even recognise us. To them we are a nuisance and toothless. What matters to them is what central government says. Local communities and RDCs are periphery actors with no voice and no one to listen. The Mines and Minerals Act overprotects mining operators and even if they fail to implement agreed environmental impact assessments and other interventions to facilitate the advancement of the cause for women, the local authority cannot do much.

Relations between mining companies and RDCs are characterised by minimal and cosmetic interaction. Such relations affect crucial interventions that would otherwise benefit women in mining communities. The RDCs cannot enforce progressive by-laws or regulations that advance women's issues, as the Mines and Minerals Act grants mine operators more leveraging space to do anything that is in their best interests. This is despite that women often report their challenges to RDCs, though the RDCs are constrained to act.

6.2. The government turns its back to citizens

Zimbabweans in general and in particular those living in mining communities are frustrated by the government's reluctance to address issues affecting mining communities. People living in mining communities, be it ordinary people or government officials interviewed, show resentment towards a government that does not seem to care about their situations. The level of frustration now present in mining communities was on display in interviews with local government officials presiding in one of the mining communities. One argued that:

> We are quite aggrieved when mining issues are discussed. As Zimbabwe, where are we heading to? DTZ-OZGEO destroyed Penhalonga. Is this our country? In South Africa, they did xenophobia; we do not know what to do with these foreign companies. It's just bad. We have no economic benefit from these mining companies. These companies came to loot because there is nothing favourable we can point from these companies. What we benefit, however, are problems such as HIV/AIDS and other diseases with the ill taken care of by women. We are quite angry about this.

The exploitation and suffering of people living in mining communities is not without government knowledge. It seems that mining companies are exploiting communities with the endorsement of senior government officials and politicians. A lack of government control is mainly because of top politicians and political appointees sitting on the boards of mining companies. Further, mining companies have built mansions for traditional leaders, as chiefs and headman are colluding with mining companies at the expense of local communities. It would seem that government service in Zimbabwe has ceased to be about public interest. Rather, it is about personal interests, as RDC officials advanced in interviews:

[8] Interview with Mutare RDC Officials.

[9] These are composed of Chiefs as Chairpersons, Council Chairpersons as vice Chairperson, and other Chiefs in the district, the RDC Chief Executive Officer as Secretary, and the District Administrator, posts which are largely male-dominated in Zimbabwe's local government system.

> If we phone a mining company over royalties, companies often say they will sit in the board with the Vice President or senior government officials and politicians thus silencing the local authority. These boards require relook as politicians are exploiting communities and plundering natural resources. On Mbada and Marange Diamonds boards, do those army generals bring real development issues on the table? Are we at war? These boards are purposively set to intimidate any outsider who wants good cooperate governance in mining operations.[10]

Partnership Africa Canada argues that 'the looting of Marange is perhaps the largest single plunder of diamonds since Cecil John Rhodes' (PAC, 2012: 2). This revelation corroborates investigations by the Parliament of Zimbabwe's Mines and Energy Portfolio Committee, which revealed that:

> ...government has not realised any meaningful contributions from the [diamond] sector. This is despite the fact that production levels and the revenue generated from exports has been on the increase.... There are serious discrepancies between what government receives from the sector and what the diamond mining companies claim to have remitted from the Treasury.... Currently, the mining community has to rely on Cooperate Social Responsibility by the mining companies, especially when their fields do not yield a good harvest (Zimbabwe Parliament, 2013).

6.3. Civil society and women movements

The arrival of large-scale mining in Marange triggered civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to focus on natural resources governance.[11] In many instances, there were no structured and sustained interventions to communities affected by diamond mining. However, the majority of CSOs managed to publicise human rights violations in the Marange Diamond Fields, something that contributed to state security agents somehow respecting human rights. Moreover, civil society played a key role in advocating that diamond mining in Marange observes Kimberly Process Certification Scheme procedures.

However, civil society organisations took time to realise that women were the most affected by mining activities in the region. In 2011, Action Aid International Zimbabwe (AAIZ) partnered with the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA) to address the negative impacts of mining to women. However, AAIZ/ZELA started working in the region without much evidence on which to base their programming.[12] Despite this, the two organisations have made significant gains in raising awareness in local communities and in particular women rights and the subsequent need for women's agency. However, research has established that the impact of AAIZ/ZELA work in reducing the negative impacts of mining on local communities and women in particular is negligible (DIC and DEGI, 2014).

What is, however, requiring attention from civil society actors working in Zimbabwe's mining communities is the need for women's social movements. By definition, social movements are 'collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities' (Tarrow, 2011: 9). Building such movements requires planning, strategising, organisation and action over time. Lessons can be drawn from Zimbabwe's low-income housing sector where the alliance of Zimbabwe Homeless Peoples Federation, a largely women's social movement founded in 1998 and Dialogue on Shelter, an NGO, have transformed low-income housing delivery (Muchadenyika, 2015).[13] Civil society support to women's social movements should focus on harnessing, sustaining and structuring agency around defined issues. In summary, building sustainable women's movements in Zimbabwe's mining communities requires women themselves to coalesce into movements, supported financially and technically by dedicated support organisations. Collaboration among various civil society actors can lead to the sharing and dissemination of knowledge, as well as yield consolidated collective action efforts.

7. Conclusion

Many conflicts in mining communities are struggles by local communities to bring mining companies and governing authorities to account. Diamond mining in Eastern Zimbabwe has tremendously altered the lifestyles of local communities and women in particular. From stories of hope to gruelling rage, women are defenceless. The government is complicit in their exploitation: a largely authoritarian state seems ready to crush any community voices, local community leaders and politicians have been corrupted and civil society is teetering. Such defines the context of women struggles in Eastern Zimbabwe. In fact, the situation is exacerbated by a largely patriarchal society, which does not seem to appreciate the meaningful contribution of women to society.

Nevertheless, opportunities do exist. In other parts of the world (for instance, Latin America), mining communities have been incubators of revolutionary ideas, ideals, and movements. The resolve of women in Eastern Zimbabwe points to people having been oppressed and traumatised for so long. It points to people waiting for action. It is, however, the nexus between action and reaction that characterises women's movements and shapes their agenda, strategies, and quest for empowerment (Steady, 2006: 1). As the struggle to address negative impacts of mining in mining communities reaches a decade (beginning in 2006), it is important to point to some key learning points. Violent and non-violent tactics are vital when dealing with an authoritarian state. The kind of activism that Zimbabwe witnessed in the human rights discourse tells how such strategies work in exposing state-sanctioned abuses. The hegemony of the state and, by extension, Zanu-PF, requires confrontation in mining communities. Such confrontation must navigate the nature of Zimbabwean politics and in particular the ruling regime, which is 'militarised, opaque, elitist, immersed in secretive and corrupt business deals, a model of elite entitlement but not popular delivery' (Saunders, 2011: 123). Such elitism and opaqueness is at the centre of diamond operations in Marange, with local communities and local government institutions completely bypassed by the central government. Finding ways of facilitating collaborative efforts among local governments, civil society and local communities can prove to be useful when engaging and confronting central government.

[10] Interview with Chimanimani RDC officials.

[11] These include Centre for Research and Development, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Centre for Natural Resources Governance, Action Aid International Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association, Zimbabwe Natural Resources Dialogue Forum, Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, National Association of NGOs, Zimbabwe Rights Association (Zim Rights), Chiadzwa Community Development Trust, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, and Women's Coalition.

[12] The project began in January 2011 and a study was commissioned to find evidence in 2015, the scheduled final year of the project.

[13] The alliance has unfastened the state's hegemony in housing delivery with 'a membership of more than 55,000 households and has facilitated access to housing stands to 15,000 households in Zimbabwe's 52 local authorities' (Muchadenyika, 2015: 4). Dialogue on Shelter provides technical and financial support to the Zimbabwe Homeless Peoples Federation.

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