



Zimbabwe Council of Churches



Voices of Hope Newsletter

Inclusive Green & Just Economies - A special Edition

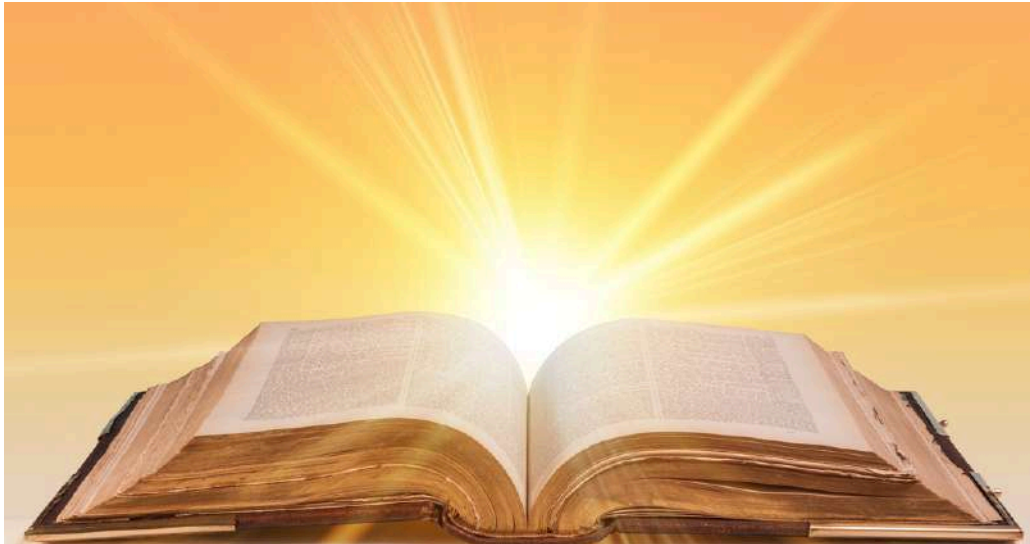
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ISSUE :1



Faith, Stewardship, and Equity: Theological Insights on Natural Resource Governance



The theological reflection on the relationship between God, humans, and natural resources is profound and multifaceted. In the book of Genesis, we see God as the ultimate Creator, declaring ownership over all that He has made. This divine ownership sets the foundation for humans to be stewards of the earth and its resources, recognizing that we are entrusted with the care and management of God's creation.

As stewards, we are called to exercise responsible governance over natural resources, acknowledging that our authority is delegated by God and comes with the weight of accountability. This accountability extends not only to God but also to our fellow human beings, especially those who are marginalised and suffering due to inequality and poverty.

The call to fight for inequality reduction and promote equitable sharing of benefits from natural resources is a moral imperative rooted in the theology of stewardship. Just as God's ownership of the earth is absolute, so too should our commitment to justice and compassion be unwavering.

In Zimbabwe, a land rich in natural resources but plagued by poverty, the theological mandate for responsible stewardship is clear. The Church and all stakeholders are called to identify their roles and mandates in advocating for life-saving management of resources, guided by the spirit of love and care for one another.

The situation in the country challenges us to re-examine our attitudes towards natural resources and our responsibility as stewards. It reminds us that true governance of resources is not just about economic gain but about upholding justice, promoting equality, and caring for the most vulnerable among us.

“Mwana akaberekwa nembereko inovunye bwechikukwa Asi tinoti unochema nbema, Mwari havazvidi” (The child has been increasingly crying because the carrier he is in is uncomfortable but we keep on saying he is lying, God do not like it)

As we seek to fulfil our mandate as stewards of God's creation, let us be guided by the comprehensive nature of God's word and the spirit of love that calls us to care for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

For the past decades, Alternative Mining Indabas (AMIs), Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indabas (ZAMIs), Provincial Alternative Mining Indabas (PAMIs) and District Alternative Mining Indabas (DAMIs) and cries of economic injustice have gotten louder and louder but no one seems to listen.

Natural Resources are for us all and not for a few sacred cows only

By Promise Mupfigo



File picture of underground mining activities

Speaking at the recently held Ward Alternative Mining Indaba which was convened by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in partnership with the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA) and Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) in Manicaland, Rev Lovemore Machipisa, emphasized the need for equitable distribution of benefits from natural resources endowed in the province.

Rev. Machipisa raised concerns about the inhumane treatment of local communities by mining companies and artisanal miners, pointing out incidents of exhumations and grave dangers posed by open pits left by miners.

He called on authorities to prioritize human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability in mining practices. *“I have noted with concern the inhuman treatment of the local people by the mining companies and the artisanal miners. Exhumations are happening and no one is talking about them, humans are in grave danger from the open pits that are being left by the miners. We must recommit ourselves to upholding human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability in all our actions,”* he said.

During the WAMI, the participants expressed concern over how mining activities are being done in Mutasa District, which has resulted in them losing their ancestral farming land and their sources of livelihood. *“Mining has impacted negatively on our environment and livelihoods. We have been effectively dispossessed of our farming land and mineral access. We have been made into criminals on our land. When we engage in mining we get arrested and charged for being illegal miners,”* said one participant. During the discussions, ZIMCODD emphasized the importance of community involvement in shaping mining policies and shared advocacy tools like power mapping and monitoring.

In Penhalonga, mining operations have been marred by accidents, resulting in fatalities among ordinary people and miners. Redwing Mine, notorious for safety violations, has been shut down multiple times by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA). The latest closure occurred in January 2023 after an accident claimed the lives of 26 individuals, predominantly artisanal miners.



"Can the ZiG Currency Stabilize Zimbabwe's Struggling Economy?"

By Yeukai Kaponda



Dr. Mupunga Director for Economic Research at the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Director for Economic Research, Dr Nebson Mupungu revealed that the central bank has enough money (ZiG) to service the country despite the acute shortages that have been experienced since its inception in April.

"We banks have enough ZiG, we are working on gaining trust and we have put in place a roadmap to curb inflation and improve the stability of ZiG," said Dr Mupungu

He was speaking during the recently held Breakfast Meeting at Kentucky Hotel convened by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in partnership with Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt Coalition and Development (ZIMCODD).

The meeting was meant to review the performance of the recently introduced Zimbabwean currency ZiG.

The introduction of the ZiG is meant to stabilize the prices and the exchange rate that were on autopilot. However the ZIG has failed to address the country's persistent issue of small change shortage, causing frustration among consumers and businesses.

ZiG's introduction faces challenges with small denominations, leading to barter systems and vouchers for retailers and consumers. The transport system is the most affected as commuter omnibuses were forced to hike their fares to a dollar from the regular 50c which prevailed during the RTGS era.

Speaking at the Meeting, the ZCC Chairperson for the Economic Justice Commission, Rev Sikhalo Cele expressed his loss of confidence and fears of the possible failure of the new currency considering its false start just like its predecessors the Bearer Cheques, Bond Notes and the RTGS.

"For a country to have its currency it's not negotiable but the currency should meet its fundamentals, we had some bearer cheques, bond notes and RTGS but where are they now, they failed and people now have no confidence in local currency," he said.

Weighing during the plenary session, the CCZ representative Dr John Chidzonga, showed disdain over the introduction the ZiG as a stabilizer of the economy considering that the country is highly informalized.

"Our economy is informal so do you think an informally employed person can have confidence with local currency given that it has failed several times, the unavailability of circulation of ZiG has forced consumers not to embrace ZiG," said he said.

The meeting was attended by several high-ranking delegates including those from, the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, faith leaders, researchers, members of the academia, and other independent economists.

The meeting was a follow-up to similar key engagements such as the First Quarter economic review meeting, the Monetary Policy Statement Review Dialogue, and an Engagement meeting with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) that were conducted by the Church.



Zimbabwe Council of Churches Trains Community Monitors to Oversee Mining Operations

By Romeo Gohwa and Promise Mupfigo

In a proactive move to ensure transparency and accountability in the mining sector, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) has trained a cadre of Community Monitors in Mutoko, Penhalonga and Zvishavane to oversee mining activities in their local areas. These monitors are playing a pivotal role through engaging various stakeholders, monitoring and reporting mining related developments in their local areas.

In Mutoko, the monitors recently engaged with the Environmental Management Association (EMA) in an interactive meeting. The event was attended by representatives from various Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), including Mhuriimwe Aids Challenging Team (MACT), Family Action for Community Empowerment, and Nyahunure Community Trust, as well as ZCC community monitors.

This initiative is part of the ZCC's broader efforts to strengthen communities and aims to have a lasting impact on communities affected by mining operations, by holding to account the mining companies and the artisanal miners.

The training of community monitors started to bear fruits as Penhalonga and Mutoko monitors hit the ground running in addressing issues affecting them.

The Community Monitors in Penhalonga have been actively engaged in on-site visits and monitoring activities in the Tsvingwe area, following reports of Artisanal Small-Scale Miners encroaching on critical infrastructure. *"Unregulated mining activities in Tsvingwe-Penhalonga are a serious concern. We must take proactive measures to mitigate these threats and safeguard the well-being of the local community,"* said a community monitor.

While the miners acknowledged that there is need to respect the designated mining-prohibited areas, the monitors observed that mining pits had already encroached upon ZESA power lines, water pipelines, and a local road, posing significant risks to health, social cohesion, and environment of the Tsvingwe-Penhalonga community.



Unregulated mining activities near a power line in Penhalonga , Mutasa District

The collaboration between the community monitors and EMA are baby-steps towards promoting transparency and accountability in the mining sector, ensuring that local communities are informed and involved in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods.

"This engagement is a significant step towards promoting transparency and accountability in the mining sector. It ensures that local communities are informed and involved in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods," said a ZCC representative.

The actions taken by the Community Monitors in Penhalonga and Mutoko engagement highlight the importance of empowering local communities in demanding accountability and transparency from the mining operation in their areas.

In a separate development, community monitors in Mutoko recently engaged with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) in an interactive meeting to review Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) documents of some mining companies operating within their communities and verify the authenticity of documents submitted by local mining companies.

“Climate Change knows no religion...,” Sheik Duwa.

By Davison Marenga

Speaking at a recently held Inter-faith Climate Adaptation Dialogue held at Kentucky Hotel in the Capital Sheikh Ismail Duwa, the President of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in Zimbabwe, called upon all religions in the country to consider climate change mainstreaming as climate change effects affect everyone despite their religious beliefs.

“The ecological catastrophe is not a question of different religions national states or political parties, it does not discriminate hence it is time to put aside individual agendas and stand up for a common cause,” said Sheik Duwa.

The dialogue was held by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in collaboration with the Methodist Development and Relief Agency (MEDRA) aimed at strengthening faith leaders in climate adaptation schemes; promoting multi-faith engagement, and more inclusive climate action by the different religions.

Speaking at the same event the Co-Chair of the ZCC’s Environment Commission Rev Freddy Kamanga expressed the need for using the pulpit in addressing the climate change mainstreaming in various churches and emphasized that the same be done with various religious sects.

“Faith leaders have a huge impact when it comes to sharing and advocating for Climate Change because of their divine influence on the congregants and community at large, hence their engagement in Climate Adaptation schemes is key,” said Rev Kamanga

Zinatha Director of Education, Prince Mutandi urged all religious leaders to educate and engage people of faith before the severe impacts of climate change affect the country, calling the nation to return to the old ways of living which were environmentally friendly.

“Strengthening faith leaders in adaptation involves engagement with people who have adequate knowledge and expertise, creating more green spaces and having help desks at their respective Churches/Mosques/Shrines. We also need to revert to the old ways of living which were environmentally clean,” said Mr Mutandi.



Sheikh Ismail Duwa, the President of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in Zimbabwe, giving theological reflections

One of the participants Maxwell Madzivanyika expressed concern over the way most people are abandoning their traditional grains opting for maize which is not drought-resistant as compared to millet, rapoko and sorghum.

“People now want cheap things because they don’t want to work, they have abandoned our traditional grains because they say it requires too much labour. They opted for maize, and they forget that some regions are not suitable for maize farming. This year we have the worst drought ever because everyone ignored the early warnings and proceeded with planting maize instead of the small grains which are more drought-resistant,” said Madzivanyika.

Zimbabwe is among other African countries whose people are already experiencing heatwaves, floods, and diseases as climate change takes its toll. The effects of climate change are projected to continue going southwards with droughts expected to be a common sight in the country.



Participants following the proceedings during the workshop



Forging a Fair Future through Amplified Community Voices on Natural Resource Governance

By *Joshua Mblanga*



File Picture of Mining activities in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Environment Law Association (ZELA), Action Aid Zimbabwe (AAZ), and Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) recently convened the Zvishavane District Alternative Mining Indaba (DAMI) and the Great Dyke Alternative Mining Indaba (PAMI).

These gatherings, held in May 2024, brought together local communities, activists, and experts to tackle the pressing issues plaguing the mining sector.

The DAMI and PAMI weren't just conferences; they were a sanctuary for open dialogue and critical analysis. Participants, including community leaders and advocacy groups, gathered to discuss the impacts of mining on their lives and livelihoods.

With a strong emphasis on inclusivity, the events saw women, men, and vulnerable groups sharing insights and experiences often overlooked in mainstream discourse.

The theological reflections by Rev. I. Nyoni and Bishop Shava underscored a crucial message: stewardship over natural resources demands accountability and fairness.

This message resonated deeply as communities voiced concerns over the unchecked granting of mining permits without proper environmental assessments.

They lamented the environmental degradation, unequal benefits, and corporate neglect that continue to afflict regions like Zvishavane, Mberengwa, Kwekwe and Shurugwi.

From the discussions emerged concrete recommendations. Calls were made to restore community ownership trusts, ensuring locals directly benefit from mining activities.

There was a unanimous plea to revise mining legislation to safeguard land rights and enforce environmental protections rigorously. Importantly, the demand for inclusive consultation processes before mining licenses are issued was echoed through every session.



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As the ZAMI agenda takes shape, inspired by the declarations of DAMI and PAMI, there is renewed hope. The consortium aims to amplify these grassroots voices on a national stage, steering Zimbabwe towards a mining sector that is equitable, sustainable, and community-centric. The road ahead is challenging, but with unity and purpose, Zimbabweans are determined to reclaim their natural wealth for the prosperity of all.

In a country rich with minerals yet plagued by poverty, the Alternative Mining Indabas have become beacons of hope and catalysts for change. They have proven that when communities, civil society, and faith-based organizations unite, they wield the power to reshape policies and practices. As Zimbabwe charts its course in the global mining landscape, it is these local voices that will guide the way forward—towards a future where every Zimbabwean reaps the benefits of their nation's riches.

Theological Reflections: The Role of the Church in Natural Resources Management



Mathew 17: KJV- Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

The concept of creation care, invites everyone to reflect on the role of people as stewards of the earth. Genesis 1:26[1], underscores humanity's unique position as bearers of God's image and custodians of his creation.

This theological foundation highlights people's responsibility to nurture and to safeguard the natural resources entrusted to them by God. [1] 26

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

In Zimbabwe, the biblical principle of being in a covenant with the stones of the field, as mentioned in Job 5:23[1], holds contemporary significance in the context of the country's abundant mineral resources.



The scripture must be understood as a call to recognize and honor the covenant relationship between humanity and the natural resources found in the land.

Zimbabwe, known for its rich mineral deposits, including gold, platinum, and diamonds, is called to steward these resources responsibly and ethically. [1] “For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you.”

Just as Job was encouraged to be in a league or covenant with the stones of the field, so too are the people of Zimbabwe called to uphold a sacred pact with their mineral wealth, ensuring that it is managed sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations.

This is a challenge to the people of Zimbabwe to view their relationship with the land and its resources through the lens of covenantal responsibility and stewardship. In Matthew 17:27, Jesus instructs Peter to go fishing and find a coin in the fish's mouth to pay the temple tax for both of them. This passage highlights the importance of fulfilling one's financial obligations, including paying taxes.

The Church, drawing from this biblical teaching, has the mandate to instruct and remind mining companies and individuals in the mining value chain of their moral duty to pay taxes on their mineral proceeds.

The Church's moral authority stems from its role as a spiritual guide and moral compass in society. The Church has the mandate to advocate for transparency and accountability in financial matters, including tax payments. All individuals have to fulfill their tax obligations ethically and responsibly.

Ultimately, by invoking Matthew 17:27 and emphasizing the moral imperative of paying taxes, the Church has to play a vital role in promoting ethical behavior and financial accountability among investors and mining companies involved in natural resource extraction.

This advocacy contributes to a more just and equitable distribution of resources, ensuring that the community benefits from the sustainable management of its mineral wealth.

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The duty of the Church to advocate for equal opportunities in mining is deeply rooted in the biblical call for justice and equity. In God's eyes, all people are equal and deserving of fair treatment and access to resources.

The Church, as a moral compass in society, has a responsibility to speak out against injustices and advocate for policies that ensure that marginalized communities have equal opportunities in the mining sector. This advocacy is not just about economic fairness but also about upholding the dignity and rights of all individuals, as they are all created in the image of God.

Similarly, the duty of the Church to educate people to take care of the ecosystem stems from the biblical mandate of stewardship. From the creation narrative in Genesis to the Psalms that declare the earth belongs to the Lord, Scripture consistently emphasizes humanity's role as caretakers of God's creation.

By educating people on the importance of caring for the ecosystem, the Church is fulfilling its duty to uphold responsible stewardship and protect the environment for future generations. This education can empower individuals to make informed choices that prioritize sustainability and conservation, reflecting their reverence for God's creation.



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