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IYASA Performing at the Official Opening of the 13th Edition of the ZAMI

The 13th edition of the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba roared into life in the city of Kings on the 29th of October bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders –Civil Society Organisations, government ministries, mining companies, industry experts, private sector and the communities.

Themed **“Putting Communities First for Community Development,”** this year’s (ZAMI), convened by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), and the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA), aims to reform the mining sector. This year’s ZAMI focuses on addressing the negative impacts of mining activities on host communities and advocating for greater community benefit-sharing.

The conference will provide a platform for dialogue, advocacy and collaboration between communities and mining companies over the next four days. In a speech read on her behalf during the opening ceremony, Bulawayo Resident Minister Judith Ncube, indicated that mining sector contributes significantly to the economy of the country and should be focused on community development.

“Currently, mining accounts for more than 60% of exports and contributes around 15% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) making Zimbabwe a resource-driven economy. Mining has played a pivotal role in Zimbabwean economic history by providing direct and indirect benefits towards human development. The mining sector gives the nation the impetus to achieve vision 2030,” she said.

The ZCC President, Bishop Ignatius Makumbe in his theological reflection, emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in the extractive sector highlighting the need for communities to benefit from the natural resources within their areas.

“The notion of just energy transition should be treated with caution; the critical question is who needs this transition? Are Zimbabweans aware of this transition when they are still using firewood as a source of energy? Are we ready for an Energy transition without addressing the critical energy gaps; thus, we should question is this a new colonial agenda,” said Rev Makumbe.

The ZAMI also gave a platform for communities to interface with government ministries and mining companies, sharing their experiences and insights, highlighting

the challenges they face and proposing sustainable solutions. Speaking at the same event Chief Bvute of Mberengwa Midlands Province urged the government to consult the local leadership first before parceling out mining licenses to the mining companies as it brings confusion to the communities.

“Imagine someone coming to you with a prospecting license, pointing at land that holds the graves of your ancestors.”

The government must prioritize community consultation before granting such licenses, as we are the rightful custodians of our land,” he said.

The ceremony opened with electrifying performances from an arts group Inkululeko Yabatsha School of Arts (IYASA) and renowned poet and musician Albert Nyathi, addressing issues of natural resource governance in their performances.

The Youth Symposium in Hindsight; Empowering Youth for a Sustainable Mining Future

Youths have set the 13th edition of the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) in motion as they shared their aspirations for meaningful engagement and participation in the mining value chain at the Youth Symposium held at Rainbow Hotel in Bulawayo recently.

Inspired by its theme, **“Empowering Youth for a Sustainable Mining Future: Amplifying Voices, Building Solutions,”** the youth symposium provided a platform for a discussion on meaningful youth participation, especially youths from different mining host communities across the country, in mining activities at different levels.

Chief Marozva from Bikita District graced the event, emphasizing the need for meaningful youth engagement in rural areas. He highlighted the importance of empowering young people to participate actively in discussions about the environmental impact of mining and its link to social and environmental hazards.

He also stressed the importance of involving youth in the mining sector, especially those from the areas where mining activities are happening to ensure a more sustainable future. *“Most youths from host communities are excluded from decision-making spaces on mining yet they are the ones being affected by these mining activities. Rural youths suffer the double tragedy of exclusion from mining and advocacy. They remain poor and less informed. We must work to include all youth, as they are most affected,”* said Chief Marozva.



Participants during the youth symposium at ZAMI 2024

Speaking at the same event, the Chief Executive Officer of the Young Miners Foundation, Mr. Payne Kupfuwa, encouraged young people to actively participate in the mining sector by acquiring mining rights.

He emphasized that by becoming miners themselves, young people could make a significant contribution to the industry. *“Youth must actively participate in mining activities rather than being passive observers. The industry needs young, innovative minds, and your involvement can significantly contribute to the country's economic growth,”* he said.

At the end of the symposium, the youth participants drafted a declaration outlining key insights and recommendations which included:

1. The government of Zimbabwe through relevant ministries should ensure adherence to regional and national legal frameworks specifically for youth participation and empowerment.

These include the Africa Youth Charter which emphasizes that there should be deliberate efforts to Train young people to take up agricultural, mineral, commercial, and industrial production.

2.The Church and Civil Society Organizations should design innovative high-impact programs to empower youths to participate in key decision-making processes at the local level. The role played by the Church and CSOs in the youth participation discourse cannot be undermined and these have taken the responsibility to empower youths hence their interventions should also relate to what stimulates young people to participate in such spaces.

3.There is a need for the revision of Zimbabwe’s taxation system that is skewed against ordinary people, especially youths but there are no clear parameters on the tax brackets that are just and promote equity and repair of the infrastructure that has been negatively affected by mining activities.

4.There is a need for deliberate action to raise awareness and have access to relevant mining-related information, especially for youths in rural areas



Participants during the youth symposium at ZAMI 2024



A Poetic Plea for Responsible Mining



Albert Nyathi reciting a poem during the 13th ZAMI edition in Bulawayo

The official opening of the 13th Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Bulawayo was a platform for diverse voices to converge and address critical issues in the mining sector.

One such voice was that of renowned poet and musician, Albert Nyathi, who delivered a powerful performance reminding the audience of the need to balance resource extraction with community well-being. He challenged the miners to consider responsible mining, avoiding unnecessary tree cutting down whenever they do their mining and making sure that they give back to the environment after their activities.

These include the Africa Youth Charter which emphasizes that there should be deliberate efforts to Train young people to take “These wounds are not easy to heal, these wounds might take forever to heal. It takes decades to grow a tree and yet it takes a split second to destroy the same tree. As we seek fortune from the belly of the earth let us not forget to do land replenishing, land reclamations, and afforestation. How will Mother Earth breathe when we continue to puncture her lungs every day without due and afforestation. How will Mother Earth breathe when we continue to puncture her lungs every day without due care”

Nyathi's words highlighted the need for mining companies to prioritize the interests of local communities and urged mining companies to avoid exploiting natural resources without considering the long-term consequences for the environment and the people.

“Miners do not bite the nipple whose breast you are feeding on. That is where your nourishment is coming from,” he added. His words captured the frustration and despair felt by many who have witnessed the destructive impact of irresponsible mining across the length and breadth of Zimbabwe.

“Mining can be a solution to our problems, but let not mining be our problem, be our headache. Mining is an eyesore as I walk around, how do I become proud of the earth’s endless wounds,” he said. Nyathi’s performance was also buttressed

by IYASA through its performances chronicling the challenges being faced by communities in which mining activities are taking place. These performances inspired many attendees, sparking discussions about the ethical implications of mining and the need for sustainable development. As the ZAMI conference unfolded, it became clear that Nyathi’s and IYASA’s message was a timely reminder that the pursuit of economic growth must be balanced with social justice and environmental protection.



IYASA , performing during the official opening of ZAMI 2024

EIA is the modern-day Rudd Concession



In the picture above ,Councillor Mushekwa and other panelist during a side session on Debt , Inequality and Extractives

Participants of the 13th edition of the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) expressed deep concern over the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) process in Zimbabwe, with Councillor Mushekwa from Bikita likening the current situation to the historical Rudd Concession, a controversial land deal that granted vast tracts of land to Cecil Rhodes in the late 19th century.

These sentiments dominated discussions during the ZAMI which was convened by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches

in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA), and Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) in Bulawayo recently.

The issue of mining companies operating without adhering to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) guidelines is increasingly prevalent in mining communities raising concerns among communities, who question the importance of EIAs when the well-being of residents is often overlooked.

“The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is just a document used as a bridge for companies to do their operations disregarding the communities’ needs, it’s a modern-day Rudd Concession,” Mushekwa said.

He further questioned the powers of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) as it does not have the enforcement and deciding powers whenever there are cases of environmental contestations between mining companies and host communities.

He categorically called for the amendments of the EMA Act and Mines and Minerals Act which he feels are not addressing the needs of the current communities.

“The Mines and Minerals Act is archaic and does not meet the needs of the present people, the government must amend the Act to align with the needs of the people. On the other hand, the EMA is powerless they need to be given the power to regulate environmental activities happening in communities,” he said.

Speaking at the same event, Chief Marozva (born Ishmael Mudhe) from Bikita District bemoaned the mining activities, especially in his home area. He felt that the communities’ voices are not heard, and when used, they are mostly nothing but tools to sanitize mining companies’ work. He further emphasised the importance of genuine, and meaningful community consultation and participation in the EIA process.

“Communities should have a genuine say in decisions that affect their livelihoods and well-being. Unfortunately, this is often not the case, as communities are marginalized and their concerns are ignored,” he said.

Mining companies frequently prioritise expediency over thoroughness in their EIAs, leading to significant neglect of the enduring environmental and social repercussions of their activities.

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“Communities should have a genuine say in decisions that affect their livelihoods and well-being. Unfortunately, this is often not the case, as communities are marginalized and their concerns are ignored,” he said.

Chief Marozva expressed his skepticism regarding the effectiveness of EIAs, recounting a troubling experience where he was invited to discuss an already fenced area, raising doubts about the genuine value of community input in such processes. He emphasised the importance of community involvement, noting that they often feel treated as mere tools to be used only when convenient.

“I was once invited to attend an EIA on an area that was already fenced and I questioned the significance of my contribution to an EIA for an area that has been fenced already. I am glad I managed to stop everything and nothing has happened yet. The communities are seen as (mops) Zvikorobo used only when there is a need,” said Chief Marozva.

Goromonzi District Environmental Officer, Cynthia Chingoviro, highlighted the fact that EIAs are often conducted without adequately considering the impact on nearby communities. She expressed concern that reversing the negative consequences of such poorly planned mining activities can be a complex and time-consuming process due to the stringent protocols involved.

“There are instances where EIAs overlook significant impacts, particularly on distant communities. For example, the Prospect Mine in Goromonzi was pegged on a farm, but the EIA failed to adequately consider the potential effects of mining and transportation activities on villages located some 10 kilometers away that are now affected by dust coming out of trucks transporting lithium ore daily,” she said.

The discussants during the side session urged the government to strengthen regulations and ensure that mining companies adhere to environmental standards and social responsibility principles calling for greater transparency and accountability in the mining sector, with a focus on sustainable development and equitable benefit-sharing.

PwDs Demand Full Implementation of Constitutional Rights



Participants during a side session on PwDs access and inclusion in the mining sector

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) have expressed deep concern over the government’s interpretation of Section 22(2) and 83 of the Zimbabwean Constitution which mandates the state to assist PwDs in achieving their full potential, but it also includes the caveat ‘within the limits of the resources available to it.’

Speaking during the side session of the 13th edition of the ZAMI, PwDs Side Session organised by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA) in Bulawayo members of the PwD community emphasised the importance of inclusive policies and practices that empower PwDs and ensure their equal participation in society, pointing out that the clause on Section 22(2) somehow denies them that opportunity. The PwDs argue that this clause has been used as a pretext to limit the government’s responsibility to provide adequate support and services. They contend that the government should prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups, including PwDs, and allocate sufficient resources to ensure their rights are fully realized.

“This clause seems to be a deliberate attempt to limit the government’s responsibility to assist PwDs. That clause is dangerous as it protects the government from doing its duties. It leaves us (PwDs) vulnerable. That must be amended,” said Disability Champion Tariro Gurure.

Weighing in during the same event, Sherif Kassim felt that the clause is being abused whenever they seek assistance from the government as they are constantly told that the government will provide services only when funds permit.

“Even when we are seeking assistance to have life-saving things we are referred to that clause (when funds are permitting) of the constitution. Even when we say we want assistance having residential stands –worse mining claims,” he said.

Speaking during the same event, Panashe Kazure chronicled the challenges that the PwDs face in the country which include accessibility challenges to critical offices –especially government buildings and the general discrimination they face from the general public and workplaces.

“Today’s world is not yet ready to have PwDs at their workplaces. If you happen to be there they quiz you on how you will do the various tasks assigned to you, not that they care but doubting your capabilities. We as PwDs face a lot of challenges which include accessing critical offices like government buildings, and shops as they lack the necessary infrastructure that allows us to manoeuvre,” he said.

The PwDs also appealed to the government that they be included in the extractive sector as they are constantly side-lined due to several factors that include lack of funds and being considered disabled.

“The PwDs have been side-lined from the mining sector for a long time and many of us are poor and cannot afford the prospectors’ licenses fee. Can the government exempt us from paying for these licences for a period,” said Paul Gumbo.

The PWD side session provided a platform for PwDs to discuss their concerns and advocate for more frequent dialogue, rather than relying solely on annual conferences which often yield limited results.

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Communities Bear the Brunt of Flawed Mining Laws in Zimbabwe



ZCC Clergy during the ZAMI 2024 proceedings

Participants during the recently held 13th edition of the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) in Bulawayo bemoaned the lack of policies that protect them whenever mining activities happen especially when communities are displaced.

The current Mines and Minerals Act, enacted in 1961, is widely regarded as inadequate in protecting the rights of communities affected by mining activities, particularly in the context of the recent surge in demand for critical minerals like gold, chrome and lithium.

The mineral rush across the breadth and length of the country has left numerous families displaced and losing their sources of livelihood.

Speaking during a Research Launch: From mining to renewable energy: Lessons learnt from benefit-sharing legislation for a just transition in Africa ZAMI side session, Vimbai Musikavanhu highlighted that the current law does not protect communal farmers because they do not have title deeds, as communal land is regarded as state land and belongs to the president.

“Communities living in mining areas across Zimbabwe are facing displacement and environmental degradation due to outdated mining laws. There is a lack of legal protection for communities against displacement. The Act prioritises mineral extraction, often disregarding the social and environmental impacts on local communities. The only people protected are people with title deeds and the rest of communal areas don’t have these deeds which means they are vulnerable,” Vimbai Musikavanhu.

Without proper compensation or resettlement plans, many people are forced to relocate, losing their livelihoods and cultural heritage.

“We have been moved out of our ancestral lands to pave the way for Sabi Star Mine and thrown to Murambinda Growth Point where we were given small houses and a small garden. This has disturbed our ways of living. Our lives have been disturbed,” said one victim of mining-induced displacements from Buhera.

Speaking at the same event, Chief Marozva from Bikita emphasised the importance of mining companies giving back to the communities where they operate. He argued that these

companies, which benefit immensely from the extraction of natural resources, have a moral obligation to contribute to the development and well-being of local communities.

“Mining companies must know that a block is not a school, when they want to help us they must give us complete things. They are taking a lot for our communities, hence they must also give back” said Chief Marozva

The current Act fails to adequately address gender equality in the mining sector. Women, who often play a crucial role in community livelihoods, are disproportionately affected by mining activities. They face limited access to resources, job opportunities, and decision-making processes.

“The current mining laws are outdated and fail to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women. We need legislation that empowers women and ensures their equal participation in the mining sector,” said a concerned participant.

While some mining companies may engage in voluntary CSR initiatives, there is no legal framework to enforce these obligations. This has led to communities often bearing the brunt of pollution, land degradation, and other negative impacts without adequate compensation or remediation.

The 1961 Mines and Minerals Act, a relic of the colonial era, was designed to serve the interests of a white minority, prioritizing the extraction of wealth over the well-being of local communities.



Youth Must Take Lead the Charge Against Economic Injustice

Reverend Mbongeni Dube, has called on young people to take the lead in addressing economic injustice which has characterised the Zimbabwean space especially perpetuated by the politicisation of natural resource governance.

Speaking at the 13th Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) Youth Symposium convened by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in conjunction with the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) as well as the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) in Bulawayo, Rev Dube emphasised the critical role of youth in driving social change and creating a more equitable future.

Drawing a parallel to the man at the Pool of Bethesda, Rev. Mbongeni Dube highlighted the plight of today's youth. Just as the man waited for 38 years for someone to assist him, he said that many young people are passively watching as others benefit from the nation's resources. *"Our youths are like the lapper at the pool of Bethsaida, watching some people benefiting from the natural resources and not taking the initiative to be involved. Pick up the mat and lead in the transformation of the country,"* he said.

He reiterated that young people's engagement can challenge systemic injustices and promote equitable access to resources, ensuring that communities benefit from the wealth generated by these resources.

Speaking during the Symposium, the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC) Youth Ambassador, Claudina Shimanda shared insights on how young people can leverage existing structures within their communities, particularly within the Church, to advocate for just economic policies.

The church offers a unique platform for youth participation, and in that regard, the youth in Zimbabwe must take advantage of these platforms to advocate for just economic policies that benefit not only the current generation but generations to come," said Shimanda.

The symposium brought together young people from various



Rev Mbongeni Dube delivering theological reflections during the youth symposium

corners of the country who shared success stories of grassroots movements that have successfully influenced local policies and engaged their communities in meaningful dialogue.

The consensus among youth was that Zimbabwe's rich natural resources are often marred by mismanagement and exploitation, and the need for youth involvement in governance processes has never been more pressing.

As the nation gears up for the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba, the symposium highlighted the crucial role that young people play in the mining sector as stakeholders and advocates for sustainable mining.

The symposium served as a rallying point, encouraging young advocates to persist in their efforts and collaborate with established organizations and government entities in fostering sustainable mining practices.

Some key recommendations from the ZAMI 13th edition

1.Enhance Domestic Resource Mobilization:

- The government should reduce reliance on borrowing by improving domestic resource mobilization. This includes strengthening natural resource governance, implementing effective tax policies, public financial management, and diversifying economic activities.

2.Empower Local Leaders in Resource Negotiations:

- Build the capacity of local community leaders to negotiate resource contracts with multinational mining companies, ensuring community interests are prioritized and communities benefit directly from natural resource exploitation.

3.Implement Inclusive Frameworks for Persons with Disabilities:

- Develop and enforce policies that make the mining sector accessible for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This includes infrastructure accessibility, interpreter services, safe chemical usage, and capacity building to ensure PWDs benefit from the mining industry

4.Prioritize Environmental and Child Rights in EIAs:

- The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) should integrate child rights considerations in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and actively involve children and youth in consultations to address the long-term impacts of mining on younger generations.

5.Strengthen Sustainability Reporting and Responsible Mining:

- Mandate mining companies to disclose their economic, environmental, and social impacts. Release the Responsible Mining Audit findings and include civil society and community stakeholders in future audits.

ZAMI in pictures



ZCC supervisory Council attending the official opening of the ZAMI 2024



ZCC president Bishop I. Makumbe delivering theological reflections at ZAMI 2024



Participants following the live proceedings at ZAMI 2024



IYASA, performing during the official opening day of ZAMI 2024



Participants following the live proceedings at ZAMI 2024



Participants following the live proceedings at ZAMI 2024





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