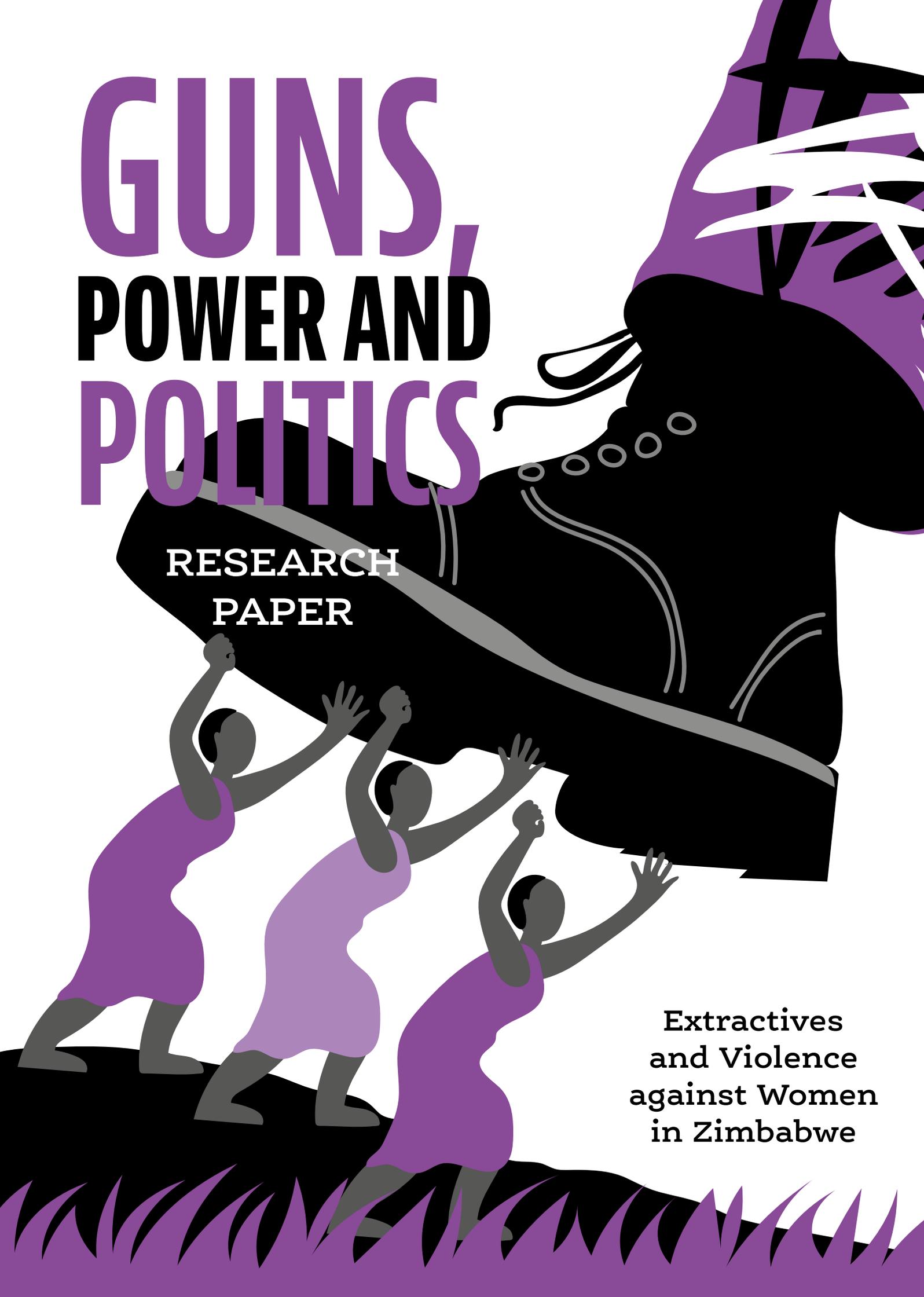


GUNS, POWER AND POLITICS

RESEARCH
PAPER

Extractives
and Violence
against Women
in Zimbabwe



Background to Guns, Power and Politics

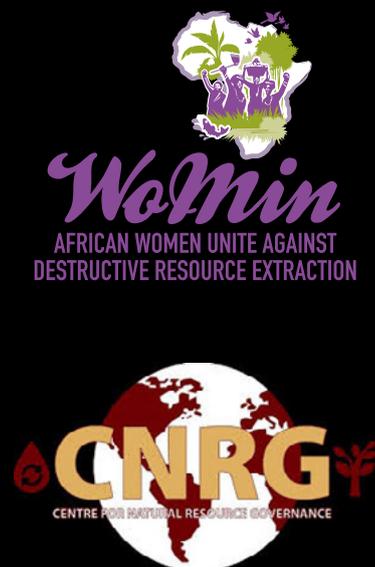
WoMin and its partners – Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) in Zimbabwe, Justiça Ambiental (JA) in Mozambique, and Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) in Sierra Leone – jointly undertook this feminist political economy research in 2018. The aim of the research is to inform national network formation, support women’s organising, trauma intervention and justice efforts by addressing the intersection of extractivism, militarisation, securitisation and violence against women.

When the research was commissioned, WoMin and its partners were clear that it would draw on formal academic analysis, research reports and reports written by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Interviews with key personnel working in NGOs or leading community organisations would be conducted, but there would be no primary fieldwork involving affected or potentially affected women. We adopted this position for a number of reasons:

- (a) Women who have endured violence perpetrated by private security and the military have rarely spoken about this experience and so there is deep unaddressed trauma; and
- (b) The terrain of work is extremely risky and there is need for careful process to enable women to think through risks and consequences to speaking out about the violence.

An extractive research process would likely cause further trauma and harm to the women we have elected to serve as an alliance. The researchers, bar one, respected this boundary.

The research was undertaken in Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, and informs a conceptual synthesis paper which draws key conclusions from the research and builds critical concepts and ideas about the relationship between extractivism, securitisation, militarisation and violence against women. The research has been translated into a community activist resource tool for information and consciousness-raising in each of the three countries.



This report draws on research commissioned by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) and the WoMin African Alliance.

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INTRODUCTION

This report explores women's experiences of violence in the context of mining in Zimbabwe. Mining in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, takes place in a highly unequal, patriarchal and violent economic system of development based on the exploitation of people and natural resources.

This study aims to uncover the violence against women in mining areas to (a) make this visible and create awareness; and (b) give information and analysis to help community activists challenge mining companies and improve the lives of communities affected by mining.

This economic system ensures that a small elite, usually corporate interests connected to powerful ruling party and state officials, benefit from mining while the majority of people experience growing rates of poverty, landlessness and unemployment. This system is characterised by extractivism, militarisation and securitisation.

Extractivism, militarisation and securitisation

Extractivism refers to the large-scale, intensive exploitation of natural resources for export to global markets for the benefit of corporations and the elite at national or global levels. Extractivism arises from the separation of humans from nature which reduces nature to raw inputs for market-oriented production.¹

The extractivist economic system is upheld by laws which privilege multinational companies and do not protect the rights of communities whose land is grabbed for mining.

Militarisation refers to the deployment of military actors, usually controlled by the state, to secure mining areas and control communities living within or close to mines.

Securitisation refers to the deployment of armed men, usually linked to private security companies, but also includes state security agents, to manage and direct the lives of communities living within, or close to, mining areas.

Through the processes of militarisation and securitisation, local men and women are exposed to violence by the army, police and private security forces.

Women's experiences of violence

While much has been written and recorded about the violence associated with mining in general terms, there has been little written on the specific violence experienced by women in mining areas. Violence has particular impacts on women and often takes the form of sexual violence.

Women's specific experiences result from their reproductive burden, namely the expectation that women should perform household duties, bear and rear children, and care for the sick. Deeply rooted sexist ideas about the services, including sex, that men believe they can extract from women emanate from systems of patriarchy integrated within the model of development that privilege the economic and political elites. Traditional community and family systems are integrated within and placed at the service of the wider patriarchal economic system ensuring that women are kept in line and perform the reproductive role assigned to them.

¹ Brand Ulrich (2013) *Energy policy and resource extractivism: resistances and alternatives*, Background paper in the Reader compiled by Marlis Gensler, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Brussels, for the seminar in Tunis, 24–26 March 2013. <https://womin.org.za/images/the-alternatives/fighting-destructive-extractivism/Rosa%20Luxemburg%20Stiftung%20-%20Energy%20Policy%20and%20Resource%20Extractivism.pdf>

As Tithi Bhattacharya notes, “Gender violence is rooted in a combination of material reality and ideological expectations about gender.”²

The specific forms of violence women experience are sexualised and include rape. It is not easy for women to talk about these forms of violence. In addition to fears of victimisation from the military, police and mine security, women fear victimisation and victim blaming that often accompany societal responses to rape. Yet, it is important and necessary that women’s specific experiences of violence are uncovered and addressed.

Overview

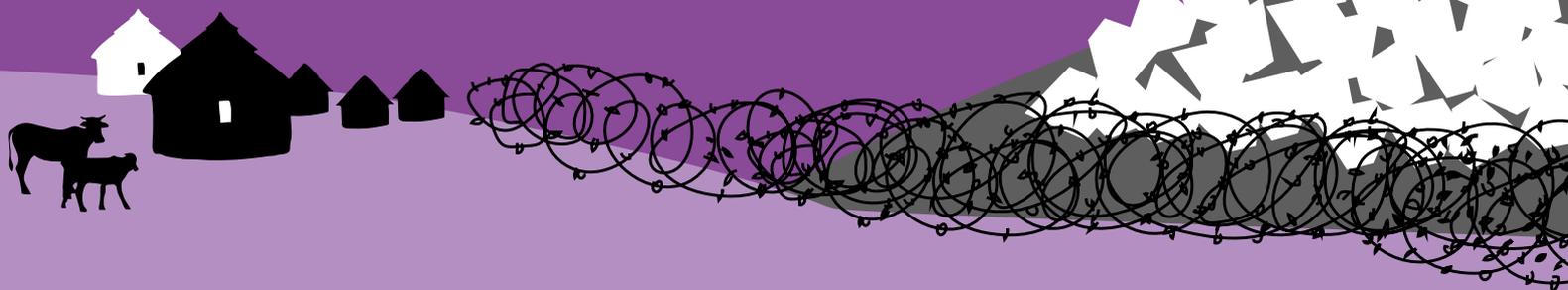
Section 1 of this report focuses on the harsh impacts of Zimbabwe’s armed forces on informal miners and the affected communities in Marange since the discovery of diamonds in 2005. This section attempts to bring to light women’s experiences of violence in the context of the broader violence, drawing on existing literature and interviews conducted for the purposes of this report. While the researcher was able to interview a few women on condition of anonymity, many others were unwilling to speak out for fear of victimisation by security forces, and in some cases for fear of marital abandonment if they revealed being raped by security officials.

Section 2 looks at the experiences of women small-scale and artisanal miners. Through interviews conducted for this report, this section highlights that despite their significant numbers in small-scale and artisanal mining, women face difficulties both in entering and working within the sector. Male small-scale and artisanal miners relegate women to the least lucrative sites and discriminate against women on the basis of social and cultural beliefs. Added to this, artisanal mining carries risks of violence from security personnel since much of this activity is classified as illegal. The interviews allude to the risks of sexual violence for women artisanal miners.

The report concludes by noting that this research opens up an important conversation about the sexualised and highly oppressive forms of violence experienced by women as a result of an extractivist model of mining. However, the research has not touched on the deep and largely unaddressed trauma women have experienced, or on the forms of redress women may want to seek for such violence. The silences around these forms of violence need to be broken, so that women can define for themselves the forms of support and redress they need.

² Bhattacharya, Tithi (2019) *Explaining gender violence in the neoliberal era* <http://www.cadtm.org/Explaining-gender-violence-in-the-neoliberal-era#nb4>

Villagers of Marange faced agricultural land grabs, forced relocations, loss of livelihoods, environmental degradation and a reign of terror by the police and military. The urban poor who rushed to Marange were to become the targets of increasing state violence.



1. MILITARISATION AND SECURITISATION IN MARANGE

Marange has been referred to as the most securitised, politicised and militarised mining area in Zimbabwe. Artisanal miners and the local community have been the targets of state security since the discovery of diamonds in Marange in 2005. The unleashing of violence in Marange relates to the exploitation of diamonds, and attempts by the ruling party and state elite to capture the diamond wealth for personal gain as well as to bolster the might of the armed forces in political battles within the country.

The abuses perpetrated by state security agencies in Marange include a massacre in 2008, torture, rape and other ongoing human rights violations that continue to this day. This report draws particularly on the 2009 report by Human Rights Watch³.

Discovery of diamonds

Diamonds were discovered in 2005 in the Chiadzwa area of the Marange District in Manicaland, Zimbabwe, some 100 kilometres from Mutare, the capital city of Manicaland province. Chiadzwa comprises around 30 villages with a total population of 20 000. Many of the villagers had settled here in the 1950s and 1960s. Life was not easy. The older villagers engaged in small-scale farming relying in particular on keeping livestock. Younger family members left the villages to find work in other rural areas and towns, and the remittances they sent home were a mainstay for many families.

At the time of the discovery of diamonds in Marange, the country was experiencing a dire economic and political crisis. The majority of Zimbabweans faced large-scale unemployment

and food shortages. The discovery of diamonds created the possibility of a release from poverty and unemployment. Marange villagers saw hope and new possibilities on their very doorstep.

The urban poor who had been hit hard by the government's 2005 nationwide urban slums demolition programme, called Operation Murambatsvina (Move the Rubbish), also saw new hope and joined the rush to the Marange diamond fields.⁴ Operation Murambatsvina, officially known as Operation Restore Order, had left more than 700 000 of the urban poor homeless or without livelihoods following the destruction of informal housing and trading structures. More than 2.4 million people were indirectly affected.

According to the UN Special Envoy tasked with assessing the impact of the exercise, 'Operation Restore Order', while purporting to target illegal dwellings and structures and to clamp down on alleged illicit activities, was carried out in an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering, and, in repeated cases, with disregard to several provisions of

³ Human Rights Watch (2009) *Diamonds in the Rough Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/06/26/diamonds-rough/human-rights-abuses-marange-diamond-fields-zimbabwe>

⁴ Ibid

national and international legal frameworks.⁵

Instead of increased prosperity, the diamond rush subjected villagers and the newly migrated to increased levels of poverty and violence. Villagers of Marange faced agricultural land grabs, forced relocations, loss of livelihoods, environmental degradation and a reign of terror by the police and military. The urban poor who rushed to Marange were to become the targets of increasing state violence.

Security syndicates

The rush to Marange from outside the area resulted in some 25 000 diamond panners mining the area by December 2006. Towards the end of 2006 government launched *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* (Operation artisanal mining has ended) which was a nationwide crackdown on artisanal mining, and by November 2006 police had arrested and seized gems and minerals from 22 500 people nationwide, 9 000 of these at Marange. However, despite this crackdown, mining continued with miners bribing police or joining syndicates run by the police.

By 2008, there were around 35 000 people living in and around Marange. These included miners, traders, and various service providers. Networks of security syndicates, officials and traders controlled mining operations and determined who was allowed to mine, and who bought and sold the diamonds. Much of this trade was declared illegal by the Zimbabwean government. At each stage the various actors took their share of the profits whilst those doing the actual mining endured great hardship and risk.⁶

The syndicates were made up of groups of artisanal miners who operated under the direct control of the police. The typical arrangement was that two to five police officers would partner with a large group of local miners to provide security in return for a fee from the sales of diamonds. Two police officers could have as many as 30 miners in one syndicate, and could control several syndicates. In 2008, there were an estimated 500 syndicates.⁷

The lives of the miners as well as the villagers were now controlled by police. Villagers were under constant surveillance and were regularly searched for diamonds. On the road between Mutare and Marange there were 11 checkpoints, at which police searched men and women and permitted those carrying diamonds to pass through only after payment of a bribe, and at which women often experienced sexual violence.

Three women told Human Rights Watch how a male police constable forced them to strip naked at a checkpoint between Mutare and Chiadzwa. After they stripped, a police constable inserted his gloved finger into their private parts, probing, and claiming to be looking for hidden diamonds.⁸

Violence and abuse

Between November 2006 and October 2008, police killed, tortured, beat, harassed, and set their dogs on artisanal miners in raids intended to drive them from the fields. Police also assaulted and arrested local community members in areas around the diamond fields, holding them in makeshift police camps for four to seven days before taking them to Mutare to be further detained and appear before court. There are reports of children as young

5 Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/ZIM%20UN%20Special%20Env%20Report.pdf>

6 *ibid*

7 *Ibid*

8 *Ibid*

as 10 years old detained.

A woman told Human Rights Watch⁹:

I was in the company of three other women; we had been fetching water at a village well. Two policemen with dogs stopped us and accused us of fetching water and cooking for miners. One police constable said, "We want to teach you a lesson never to assist illegal miners." He ordered us to kneel down and take off our blouses. We did and they set their dogs on us. We all suffered dog bites on our breasts. After a few minutes the police told us that the dogs only eat human breast meat and let us go.

Women living in villages on the diamond fields suffered sexual abuse and degrading treatment by the police stationed in Marange. Several women told Human Rights Watch how police officers stationed in Chiadzwa in 2008 would amuse themselves by fighting over women and gambling on them. The winner's 'prize' was to rape the women for the night.

Some women told Human Rights Watch that they volunteered sexual favors in return for access to the diamond fields or in exchange for diamonds. A miner told Human Rights Watch that he had three women in his team and that their modus operandi was that while the three women had sex with the six police on guard, the men in the team went to dig for diamonds.¹⁰

Militarisation

Once the extent of the diamond wealth became known, senior officials in the state and state agencies intensified their efforts to capture the diamond fields from artisanal miners. They did this through a military campaign, in effect a massacre, codenamed Operation Hakudzokwi (You Shall Not Return).

On October 27, 2008 the Zimbabwean government sent the Zimbabwe Army, Air Force and Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) agents from the Office of the President to launch Operation Hakudzokwi in Marange. More than 800 soldiers shot at miners on the ground, aided by soldiers in helicopters, firing live ammunition and tear gas into the diamond fields and surrounding villages from the air. The operation lasted three weeks. More than 200 artisanal miners and diamond dealers were gunned down. Thousands more were tortured and hundreds of women were raped.

The Human Rights Watch Report notes that the use of excessive force by the army suggests that the military was bent on controlling who had access to the diamonds, with the main intended beneficiaries being the military and its connections.¹¹

The reign of terror unleashed on the miners and the local villagers has continued over the years. Soldiers subject villagers to unlawful and arbitrary searches and detain them to extort money. The soldiers search houses without the necessary search warrants and force local women and children to cook for them and slaughter livestock.

A 43-year-old woman told Human Rights Watch about beatings at the hands of soldiers in Betera village:¹²

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

On February 20, 2009, at 8 pm, two soldiers accused us of keeping illegal diamond miners. They beat us using fresh tree branches. They stole USD200, a radio, and a 50-kilogram bag of maize meal and various other kitchen utensils. They ordered me and my 14-year-old niece to their base at Betera Primary School to clean their tents and cook for them. They only released us around 10am the following day.

Far from dreams of a better life, for residents of Marange the diamonds have meant land grabs, deaths of their cattle from drinking polluted water, an occupation by police and army and having their villages fenced in within the diamond mining area.

Laws and regulations

In addition to the use of force, laws were used to control the diamond wealth. After the discovery of diamonds, the government placed Marange communal lands under the Protected Places and Areas Act (PPA). This Act enables mining companies to occupy 'protected areas' at any time, and undermines other legislation that requires fair, timeous and transparent processes of resettlement of, and compensation to, people displaced by mining.

In its effort to keep the diamonds out of reach of artisanal miners, government put the entire community into forced confinement within a no-go area – isolating them from the rest of the country. Friends and family can visit community members inside the restricted zone, only if they procure clearance letters from the police which is sometimes denied. This makes it very difficult for relatives or friends to visit.

Marange community members who own vehicles are required to obtain a permit in addition to the

regular Zimbabwe motor vehicle licence. These permits have to be renewed monthly in Mutare at a cumulative cost of more than \$450 a year. Driving without the permit attracts beatings and extortion on allegations of being a diamond dealer.

In contrast, the personnel of diamond mining companies and the military and security operatives who have occupied the area move around freely in Marange and extract the diamonds.

Girls and women in Marange are at risk of sexual and physical violence perpetrated by these security and military personnel who they encounter on their way to school and when they walk to fetch water or attend to their fields.

Environmental concerns

Several villagers in Marange and those further downstream have repeatedly complained of their cattle dying after drinking polluted water from the Marange diamond mining companies.¹³ The Environmental Management Agency has failed to take action to protect the villagers whose livestock is their most significant form of wealth. There have been reports of cattle herders 'arrested' and tortured by company security guards or by security forces after being accused of trespassing.

The Environmental Management Act of 2002 (EMA) has been ineffective in dealing with big mining corporations, especially those that are militarised and politicised. Big companies have been made to pay small fines or have had simply no action taken against them for environmental pollution. This encourages companies to continue polluting, preferring instead to pay small fines rather than investing in new and cleaner technology. New Reclam, the parent company for Grandwell Holdings which formed a joint venture with Marange Resources to constitute Mbada Diamonds

¹³ The Zimbabwean (2014) 1,000 cattle die from mining pollution. <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2014/12/1000-cattle-die-from-mining/>

reported in its 2011 annual report that it was cheaper to pollute and pay fines than to comply with environmental regulations. It stated:

“As part of its diamond mining operations,” the Reclam report said, “Mbada uses various chemicals and produces overburden and wastewater, which could have a negative impact on wildlife and vegetation of adjacent areas if improperly discharged. In addition, hazardous materials, such as explosives used in mining operations and solvents, are used to clean, refurbish and maintain mining, processing and other equipment.

“These activities are subject to a number of laws and regulations relating to environmental protection. Fees are assessed for exceeding agreed limits on emissions and effluents. Currently these fees are generally small in relation to the cost of environmental protection equipment and it is generally less expensive to pay the fees than to install anti-pollution devices. Further, the applicable laws do not generally require clean-up of environmental pollutants, and when clean-up is required, the applicable laws provide no guidance as to the extent to which the clean-up must be carried out.”¹⁴

The Chinese mining companies which dominated mining activities in Marange between 2011 and 2016 had little interest to invest in corporate social responsibility for the people affected by mining. Since the discovery of alluvial diamonds in Marange, the contemporary state has not held the foreign mining companies accountable for failing to

fulfil their corporate social commitments.

Forced relocations

In 2009, the government with assistance from the armed forces, forcibly removed 1300 families from Marange to clear land for diamond mining. These families were moved to Arda Transau, a government farm about 60 kilometres north of Marange where they experience considerable hardship and violence.

In effecting the forced removals, government argued that diamonds were key to economic recovery and that the relocations were therefore in the ‘national interest’. The country’s laws enabled the removals with the [Communal Lands Act](#) (1982) allowing the state to evict people from communal lands, while punishing resistance to eviction by a fine or one-year imprisonment or both, and protecting the holder of a mining title from eviction. In addition, Section 26 of the [Mines and Minerals Act \(MMA\)](#) (1961) gives precedence to mining companies over use rights exercised by communal farmers. The MMA aids displacement by listing communal land as land that can be used for mining activities, and since large numbers of communal farmers are women, this worsens the situation for women’s access to resources essential for sustainable livelihoods.¹⁵

In addition to the laws, government deemed it necessary to use force. The Marange relocations started in 2009, and were the most brutal, aggressive and inhumane relocations in Zimbabwe’s post-independence history. Marange villagers resisted relocation for some months before government took action.

¹⁴ Mambondiani, A. (2012) *The Pollution Fallout From Zimbabwe’s Blood Diamonds*. <https://e360.yale.edu/features/the-pollution-fallout-from-zimbabwes-blood-diamonds>

¹⁵ Mwase, D. (2016) “Boom or gloom?” *An examination of the impact of mining activities on the livelihoods of female smallholder farmers in Zvishavane District. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master’s Degree in Women’s Law, Southern and Eastern African Regional Centre for Women’s Law, University of Zimbabwe*. http://ir.uz.ac.zw/bitstream/handle/10646/3322/Mwase_Boom_or_Gloom.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Zimbabwean security forces forced the initial earmarked families into trucks at gunpoint. Their homes were destroyed by bulldozers while they watched. There was no valuation of their properties and government refused to compensate the families on the basis that the Communal Land Act grants citizens use rights rather than ownership rights to communal land.

Human rights violations

Women interviewed for this research spoke of the brutality they faced at the hands of the military and the mining companies who forced them to leave their villages. The interviews were conducted in a hushed environment and it was clear that the women feared reprisals should they be known to have articulated their concerns to strangers.

The women told of the gross human rights violations they faced: the lack of consultation or even basic information relating to plans for their removal; of being forced to leave their homes at gunpoint; and of being threatened if they resisted or spoke out against these violations.

One woman related the following:

We were kidnapped and moved here in 2010. The mining companies came in 2006 and...counted us and told us about diamonds. At villages X and Y, they came and started evaluating buildings, chickens and children etc. They were making preparations for our removal, together with villages A and B, to Arda Transau. We were not even aware of what they were planning prior to our removal. They came in June 2010 and told [the headman that] 12 homesteads had to be moved. Where to? We did not know and were not told.

A second woman told the researcher:

[A senior military officer] told me that I had to move to Arda Transau, he pointed a gun

at me in the meeting. After that we were told to go to the school, get onto the bus and go see the houses that we were moving into. On the 11th, we were shown the houses and between the 12th and the 14th, we were moved there. We had no chance to take anything. We left our mapfunde (finger millet), groundnuts and other crops in the fields. We were given 50 kilogrammes of mealie meal, 2 kilograms of sugar, 2 litres of cooking oil, candles and a few green bars of soap. Can you imagine? How was that going to help anybody? We were told not to say bad things about the government. Talk would get us into trouble. We were told to say we were happy and well, and that we had been given food and electricity, which we were made to sign for.

Women's plight at Arda Transau

The gendered nature of the burdens of relocation is indicated by women's concerns about inadequate water, food, electricity and schooling for the children of the resettled population in Arda Transau.

Women's labour burdens have increased since their relocation. They cannot afford to pay for basic amenities such as water and electricity which were free in their former villages. Problems relating to the provision of basic necessities cause distress for women who are traditionally responsible for growing food and collecting water, firewood and provisioning other household necessities.

As two women told the researcher:

We left our village where we had wells, but here it's dry and there is no water. The soldiers who are mine partners with the Chinese don't want us to chop trees for firewood, but we have no fuel.

We had water at our old homes and here

there is no water for us to do gardening or other projects. We were betrayed and now we are silenced, with no security of tenure, no electricity, water and income generation opportunities. Our plight is a terrible one and we wish to return to our homes where they took us from.

Former substantial homes were razed to the ground and families were provided with smaller, flimsy homes on relocated lands. Men with more than one wife are expected to share the same bedroom with all their wives. This is impractical, unworkable and constitutes an affront to the dignity of all people concerned.

As one woman said:

I lost my brick house with two rooms and a kitchen and was pushed into a tiny house with my co-wife, husband and children. I was told that the houses belong to the government. We have no security of tenure, no water, no electricity or other amenities. There is no firewood and these houses are chipping away...

Livelihoods

In the absence of men, many of whom have migrated to seek jobs elsewhere, women are left to develop new livelihoods and grow food in fields with unfertile soil. There is a palpable sense of betrayal, disappointment and dejection amongst women and many would willingly return to their previous homes if they could.

The relocated families struggled to re-establish livelihoods at Arda Transau, mainly due to limited access to land and poor quality soil. Women began to collect thatching grass and firewood from neighbouring villages under Chief Zimunya

which they would sell at Odzi business centre. If caught cutting grass or firewood, the women were subjected to forced labour by the village heads of the neighbouring villages.¹⁶ It is feared that some women were sexually abused.

Living in fear of reprisals

Generally, the relocated villagers are viewed as inferior by the Zimunya people whose land they now live on. Government did not make any efforts to integrate the Marange villagers into Chief Zimunya's community.

The community lives in fear of reprisals if they speak out. As a woman told the researcher:

We are muzzled and not allowed to talk about our situation. We are forced to say that we get food and school fees for our children, uniforms and other things even if all this is not true. In fact, one man [named] was mobilised and instructed to tell lies to the Kimberley Certification Process people so that the mining companies could be granted certificates to operate even though they are abusing us. We were promised compensation after the diamonds were mined and sold, but we have never received a cent!

¹⁶ Centre for Natural Resource Governance (2014) Marange relocations lead to new poverty. <https://www.swradioafrica.com/Documents/Marange%20relocations%20lead%20to%20new%20poverty.pdf>

Women who have managed to get into small-scale mining, face risks especially if they are young, single and do not have political connections.



2. EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN SMALL-SCALE AND ARTISANAL MINING

This section shifts the focus from women in communities affected by mining, to women engaged in mining activities as artisanal and small-scale miners.

Artisanal mining is usually undertaken at a very small scale and involves manual labour, while small-scale mining tends to be mechanised and on a larger scale.

Growth of artisanal and small-scale miners

In the early 1990s, the World Bank's imposed economic structural adjustment programs led to high levels of poverty and unemployment, resulting in an influx of people into the artisanal and small-scale mining sector.

The growth of the artisanal mining sector in Zimbabwe is thus directly linked to growing poverty resulting from economic contraction in the manufacturing, agricultural and mining sectors since the early 1990s. This situation was exacerbated by the violent land reform program and political instability that commenced in 2000.

In contemporary Zimbabwe, formal unemployment is currently estimated at over 90%, pushing a significant proportion of the population into artisanal mining. The growing climate crisis is, no doubt, driving a larger number of people into artisanal mining as desertification and drought erode the ability of peasants to produce food, but this is as yet not firmly established in the literature.

Makorokoza

While some artisanal and small-scale miners are registered with the ministry of mines, many work informally and illegally due to high registration fees and restrictive legislation. The small-scale panners, popularly termed makorokoza, are mostly men under 35 years who combine farming with off-season panning.¹⁷

Today, artisanal mining absorbs a growing proportion of marginalised black male and female Zimbabweans and provides a form of livelihood to youth, who constitute a large proportion of the informal mining population. Areas like Esigodini in Matabeleland South are widely known for artisanal and small-scale mining and the miners are makorokoza in the local language.

Mining as livelihood

By 2017, artisanal gold mining accounted for about 50% of formal gold output and was supporting the livelihoods of almost 2 million people.¹⁸ This is in the context of a poverty rate estimated at 70% in 2011, with nearly three quarters of the population living below the poverty line, and an estimated four million people in need of food aid by 2017.¹⁹

As formal gold mining declined post-1999, small-scale operations grew and reached a peak in 2008. Much of the gold was traded illegally and smuggled out of the country.

¹⁷ Scoones, I. (2014) 'Zimbabwe's Gold Rush: Livelihoods for the Poor or a Patronage Economy or Both?' <https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2014/01/27/zimbabwes-gold-rush-livelihoods-for-the-poor-or-a-patronage-economy-or-both/> (accessed 2 March 2017) in Malinga

¹⁸ Chipangura, Njabulo (2018) Towards the decriminalisation of artisanal gold mining in Eastern Zimbabwe in *The Extractive Industries and Society* Volume 6, Issue 1, January 2019, Pages 154-161, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214790X18301278#sec0035>

¹⁹ Global Witness (2017) *An Inside Job: Zimbabwe: The state, the security forces, and a decade of disappearing diamonds* <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-diamonds/inside-job/>

Mawowa (2013)²⁰ notes that the gold rush in KweKwe should not be interpreted just as a form of local ‘survivalist’ strategies of the poor, but as a site of political control and accumulation by elites, and therefore part of a ‘patronage economy’.²¹

Although the Mines and Minerals Act (1961) recognises the small-scale mining sector, it focuses on large-scale mining, pays scant attention to small-scale mining and does not even mention artisanal mining – the sectors in which the majority of women miners are active.

Despite the scale of this sector and its centrality to the informal economy, artisanal mining remains unlawful in Zimbabwe, with government vacillating between supporting and criminalising artisanal miners. In 2013, government announced a plan to decriminalise artisanal mining and has since reduced costs and requirements for the granting of permits.²²

The costs to enter the mining sector and operate profitably are much higher for women than men. Women’s rights are violated within all scales of mining – large, small and artisanal. The form and extent of these violations varies depending on the resources a woman can mobilise to minimise or mitigate abuses and violations.

Obstacles to women’s participation in mining

Securing licences, permits, leases and exclusive prospecting orders are lengthy and costly processes and sometimes political. These present obstacles to women’s participation in mining. Very few women own or are registered as proprietors of small-scale mines. The few women proprietors face enormous challenges and incur high social and economic costs when they attempt to assert their rights. Government frequently disburses

loans to small-scale miners through the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. However, these loans are highly politicised as they are awarded to bona fide members of the ruling Zimbabwe African Nation Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). Women who access these loans are sometimes sexually exploited.

Unlike investors in the large-scale mining sector, small-scale mining investors have to traverse tortuous bureaucracies as the researcher for this study found in interviews with women small-scale miners.

Mrs D described her experience of attempting to secure a licence for small-scale mining. After being laid off from her job in 2012, Mrs D had decided to use her severance benefits to venture into small-scale gold mining. After coming up against incessant requests for bribes and sexual favours to secure the necessary permits she abandoned her effort to enter the mining sector:

At every stage, people want to be bribed or to have a sexual relationship with you to help you to secure permits, papers, to get this person to sign this and that! Ah! The corruption and the extortion! Ndakazvitadza! [I could not manage it!] You go to a different place to do this and that! It is a system designed to frustrate people and ensure they lose their integrity and also make sure that those in mining do not have competition.

Like Mrs D, many small-scale miners, especially women, give up because of sexual predation and the bureaucratic hurdles to secure the plethora of permits required for mining in the small-scale sector.

For women who manage to gain a foothold in small-

20 Mawowa, Showers (2013) *The Political Economy of Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Central Zimbabwe*. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 39. 10.1080/03057070.2013.858540.

21 Scoones, I. 2014 *Zimbabwe’s Gold Rush: Livelihoods for the Poor or a Patronage Economy or Both?* <https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2014/01/27/zimbabwes-gold-rush-livelihoods-for-the-poor-or-a-patronage-economy-or-both/> (accessed 2 March 2017)

22 Ibid

scale mining, risks remain high. Being young, female and single with weak or no political connections, exposes small-scale miners to predation by politically connected individuals. Lone women and young people are more vulnerable to such predation.

Mrs E, a small-scale miner who took over her husband's claim after he died, was harassed by war veterans intent on grabbing her interests. The war veterans mobilised their political allies within the civil service and the ZANU-PF party to get mining licences against Mrs E's claim. A ministry of mines official advised Mrs E to allow the war veterans to "share" her claim, a clear violation of the law. The war veterans succeeded in this hijacking because Mrs E had no political influence. She said:

I was afraid of losing my investment and I reluctantly allowed the interloper to mine on my claim. The interloper had a compressor and labour and he proceeded to mine on my claim. I still want the interloper off my claim.

Mrs E's case illustrates the corruption in the departments responsible for issuing mining licences and documentation. And these play out in the form of particular exclusions and violations affecting women miners.

Added to this, women in the small-scale mining sector are vulnerable to abuse by male miners. In the absence of training and advisory organisations, women often rely on male advisors and partners to learn the mining business as they go along. Mrs G, another small-scale miner, held and paid mining fees for the claim that she worked. A male miner suggested that they form a partnership, to which she agreed. Mrs G remitted the fees for the renewal of the mining licence and other costs related to the claim, but the male partner failed to contribute his agreed share. Mrs G developed the claim over five years and when it started yielding good returns, the partner began making claims on the proceeds from the mine. Mrs G contested the matter in court and won.

These experiences indicate how precarious small-scale mining is for women, especially those with little or no visible male support.

Artisanal mining

In comparison to the small-scale mining sector, men and women do not have to traverse the same tortuous bureaucracies in the artisanal mining sector. Landowners whose land is known to hold mineral deposits might allow artisanal miners to mine the land or they might work old mines where tailings are known to contain gold.

It is estimated that more women are engaged in artisanal mining than in small-scale mining. However, women in artisanal mining cannot compete on an equal basis with men, because of lower access to, and control over, mining claims. In addition, women face discrimination because of cultural and social beliefs. And the security surveillance and resulting violence in this sector which is largely illegal can serve as a deterrent for women.

The table below, modified from Hentschel, et al. (2002)²³ indicates a high representation of women in the artisanal mining sector in some parts of Africa, including Zimbabwe. However, while Hentschel, et al. put the proportion of women in artisanal mining in Zimbabwe at 50%, the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) believes the participation of women in artisanal mining does not exceed 15% of the total number of artisanal miners, due to the prevalence of violence, restrictive legislation and the demands of women's family roles.

²³ Hentschel, T., Hruschka, F. & Priester, M. (2002) Global report on artisanal & small-scale mining. MMSD 70 <<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G00723.pdf>>.

Table 1: Women in artisanal & small-scale mining

Country	Number of women	Proportion of women
Burkina Faso	45 000–85 000	45%
Ghana	89 500	45%
Mali	100 000	50%
South Africa	500	5%
Zimbabwe	153 000	50%

Research by Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) in 2012²⁴ shows that men are more privileged than women in artisanal mining and that men have the power to control the work women may do and the extent they benefit. In the urban areas, WLSA found that men have better access to pits and surface mining areas with high gold concentrations. When the ore in these mineral rich sites are exhausted, men go in search of land with higher gold concentrations and abandon these sites to women.

Women often work on male miners' claims where they are levied 30% to 50% of the gold produced.

When Zimbabwe's former first lady Grace Mugabe used her political muscle to give gold claims to women at Kitsiyatota in Bindura, this attracted women artisanal miners from all over the country. Research by CNRG in 2015 revealed that many of these women artisanal miners dispossessed other women of their claims and offered them to men. Displaced women artisanal miners told CNRG that they were forced, by economic circumstance, to supply water and cook food for male panners, whilst others became commercial sex workers at the site.²⁵

Stigmatising beliefs about women

Social and cultural beliefs also work against women. In 2015, CNRG embarked on a project to assist 52 artisanal miners to form syndicates and acquire mining claims. At the syndication phase CNRG noted that men were reluctant to include women in their groups. The men referred to cultural beliefs and societal stereotypes that characterise women as weak and unfit for underground work. These characterisations contradicted CNRG's observations that women in some of the groups worked harder and spent more hours at the mine site than their male counterparts.

Artisanal miners generally believe that women are 'polluted' and make gold 'disappear' because they menstruate. This is reinforced by other research that cites beliefs about women's polluting capacities at mining sites leading to the exclusion of women and the violation of their right to participate in the most lucrative parts of the mining chain.²⁶

These stigmatising beliefs about women stand in sharp contrast to beliefs about women in Zimbabwean folklore which link women to fecundity, procreation and reproduction. In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, women took part in mining gold, precious stones and other valuable resources. The narratives of pollution emerged with the colonial culture of excluding women and banishing them to the domestic realm. This contradicted the Shona and Ndebele cultures in which domestic labour was historically performed by, and linked to older girls, while older women were more involved in agriculture, mining and other roles related to food production and procurement.

While conducting interviews for this study the researcher came across an artisanal mining group

24 WLSA (2012) *Creating a conducive legal and policy environment for women in mining in Zimbabwe. A report on a baseline study conducted in Kwekwe and Zhombe, Midlands Province.*

<http://www.academia.edu/35285529/Women_and_Law_In_Southern_Africa_Research_and_Education_Trust_Zimbabwe_Creating_a_conducive_legal_and_policy_environment_for_women_in_mining_in_Zimbabwe_A_report_on_a_baseline_study_conducted_in_Kwekwe_and_Zhombe_Midlands_Province>

25 Centre for Natural Resource Governance (2015) *A case for formalizing artisanal mining in Zimbabwe.*

26 Dreschler, B. (2001) *Small-scale mining and sustainable development within the SADC region. MMSD 84* <https://commdev.org/pdf/publications/Small-Scale-Mining-Development-SADC-Region.pdf>

comprising ten men and two women collecting ore from a river they had diverted to pass through their camp. In this artisanal mining syndicate, women were definitely discriminated against, but were accepted as members because of their family ties to influential syndicate members. The women performed feminised work (washing the ore) while the men performed the more physically demanding work for which they were paid more than women.

One of the men leading this artisanal mining group commented:

We don't like to work with women, because we might not know them well enough to trust them. As men, we build relationships of trust over food, cigarettes and other activities whereas with women it's harder to forge such relationships without causing conflict, especially if the women have relationships with men who are not in the group. This type of work is suitable for men because it is hard and taxing. A miner needs to shovel soil for up to 10 hours every day.

Police and security personnel

The group spoke to the researcher about problems they experienced with the police, and with security personnel.

The Support Unit [an anti-riot armed police unit] is the biggest extortionist and they used to be nasty to us. We decided to share the spoils from our mining with them to maintain our mining venture. We bribe them a dollar per head every Monday and Friday. The DTZ mining company guards tried to frighten us off this riverbed but we negotiated with the farm owner on whose land this river passes. We pay him something too so that he allows us to mine on this river. Other members of law enforcement such as the police extort money from other gold panners, and they leave us alone, now that they know we pay the Support Unit for the right to mine here.

Because much artisanal mining is conducted illegally, artisanal miners are vulnerable to violence perpetrated by law enforcement agents and criminals. The exploitation and abuse of artisanal miners includes extortion and harassment by the police and the security personnel with whom they are forced to collaborate. Women artisanal miners are more vulnerable than men to physical, sexual and other forms of violence, and this serves at times to deter women from artisanal mining as Mrs X from Marange told the researcher of this study. Mrs X spoke about the ever-present dangers of being physically violated by guards:

We left home in a party of 14 people. I was one of four females among the men and while I was walking, I heard footsteps behind me, but I kept on walking. In a short time, I was surrounded and forced down and I sat. The man following me said 'Batai munhu' [Catch that person] and he called a car to collect the rest of my party. My partners ran away and I was the only one caught. The guard holding me told me that if he had been on his own, he would have let me go... He asked me to load the sacks of ore into the car. There were three guards with cars, and I was in the car with three men and a dog. I thought we were going to the police, but the car went round and headed into a mountainous area. One of the men ordered the dog to 'catch' me. The dog bit me on the stomach while my hands were tied. I was using my hands to try to stop the dog from biting me. The dog continued to bite me till I went quiet. Its teeth were sunk into my flesh and it would not let me go. They then mocked me asking me to fill in forms indicating whether I desired to be a guard, a house-girl or a prostitute. I was scared that I would be killed and buried. The car stopped and the driver barked, 'Get out' as he unchained me. He then scolded me and drove off. They had just cast me out in the back of nowhere... After my experience, only men go to get ore, but they still get bitten by dogs. In the past, trespassers were taken to the police but now, the guards from the company do not want people fined. Men are killed by the dogs that are set on them.



The control over diamond wealth was linked to the internal ZANU PF military power struggles that led to the military coup against former President Mugabe.

3. BOLSTERING POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONTROL THROUGH MINERAL WEALTH

Marange is an example of state and corporate elites seizing control over mineral wealth to strengthen political and military power of state factions.

The overt militarisation of mining, and specifically the diamond sector in Zimbabwe, has occurred in the context of an economic crisis, increased contestation for power within the Zanu PF, and in the growing dominance of the extractives sector as the basis for wealth accumulation by powerful party and military members.

In Marange the state took over diamond exploitation from the informal miners post-2008 and formed partnerships with various corporate, military and political entities from within and outside Zimbabwe.

Government secured a 50% stake in the major operating companies through the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (2008) which compelled all companies with a share capital above USD\$500 000 to cede or make arrangements to surrender 51% of their shares or interests to indigenous Zimbabweans.²⁷ The Act was an elite empowerment vehicle, and it shifted patronage networks in Marange post-2008. It failed to create space for artisanal miners to operate legally and included no criteria for how ordinary Zimbabweans could acquire part of the 51% shares.

A few months after Operation Hakudzokwi in 2009, the first two companies to be registered in Marange were Mbada Diamonds and Canadile Miners. Mbada was a joint venture between Marange Resources, a subsidiary of the Zimbabwe

Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC) and the Mauritius registered Grandwell Holdings, a subsidiary of South Africa's New Reclamation Group. Grandwell itself was owned 50.1% by New Reclamation Group whilst the remaining 49.9% of shares were owned by a consortium of Chinese businessmen.²⁸ Canadile Miners was a joint venture between South Africa's Core Mining and ZMDC's subsidiary, Marange Resources. These two companies were later joined by more joint ventures such as Anjin Investments, Jinan, Gyname, Diamond Mining Corporation (DMC) and Kusena Diamonds.

Some senior party and military officials gained huge wealth through securing 51% of the shares in these companies. The elites looted the mines behind a veil of secrecy which is only recently being uncovered, most notably through the findings of Global Witness in its 2017 report 'An Inside Job'.²⁹

The Global Witness report exposed the army's and the Central Intelligence Organisation's (CIO) ownership stakes in diamond mining companies in Marange. It found secret documents which suggest that Zimbabwe's feared spying agency, the CIO, may hold a stake in Kusena Diamonds, which had been incorporated into the government-led Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC). And it found significant links between diamond company Anjin and Zimbabwe's military.

²⁷ Saunders, Richard (2008). *Crisis, Capital, Compromise: Mining and Empowerment in Zimbabwe*. *African Sociological Review* 12, 1, 2008, pp.67-87 <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/asr/article/viewFile/43530/27054> (accessed 12 March, 2018)

²⁸ Mbada swam against the tide By Elias Mambo/Obey Manaiti, *Independent*, March 3, 2017 <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2017/03/03/ministers-gang-bank-fat-cats/>

²⁹ Global Witness (2017) *An Inside Job: Zimbabwe: The state, the security forces, and a decade of disappearing diamonds* <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-diamonds/inside-job/>

Ownership of the largest concession in Marange, held by Mbada Diamonds, was secret, but Global Witness found evidence to suggest that a 25% stake in Mbada Diamonds was owned by Robert Mhlanga, a retired member of Zimbabwe's security forces, ally of the ruling party, and alleged former presidential pilot.

Diamond Mining Corporation (DMC) was formed as a joint venture by the Zimbabwean government with a private investor, despite evidence suggesting that the individuals behind the company were involved in extensive smuggling of Marange diamonds for several years.³⁰

The Global Witness report revealed that diamonds provided secret off-budget funding for state security forces and was likely to have funded state repression, the silencing of dissent, and the unleashing of violence on Zimbabwe's people during elections. It showed that the control over diamond wealth was directly linked to the internal ZANU PF military power struggles that culminated in Mugabe's ejection from power.

Prior to the military coup which ousted him, President Robert Mugabe had forced Chinese companies out of Marange and consolidated the operation into one entity, the ZCDC which reportedly had links to himself and his wife. The Zimbabwean military, with their accumulated benefit from mining in the DRC³¹ and the diamond fields of Zimbabwe, 'intervened' in November 2017, to oust Mugabe from the presidency, reportedly because he tried to side-line them politically and economically, in favour of his wife and her political faction.³²

Mineral wealth thus was used to enrich individuals and to strengthen political and military factions with little interest in the lives and livelihoods of ordinary Zimbabweans.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *The Zimbabwe Military participated in the DRC war in 1997 to defend Laurent Kabila from rebel attacks. A 2002 UN report on companies and entities that participated in the plunder of DRC's natural resources during this period mentioned a Zimbabwe National Army-linked company, COSLEG, as a beneficiary of this looting. See <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/mnangagwa-moyo-shiri-involved-drc-plunder-un-report/>*

³² 'Zimbabwe army chief warns military could "step in" over party purge', *AFP, The Guardian* 13 November 2017.

In societies across the world, women have an unfair burden of work. They are expected to perform household duties, take care of men, the children and the sick, and to make sure families are fed and clothed.





“Why do they say I asked for it?”

“Why do they ask if I tempted him?”

“Why do they ask what I was wearing?”

“Why do they ask what I was doing there?”

CONCLUSION

This report has analysed the development of securitised and militarised extractivism in Zimbabwe and described how this is escalating violence against women, including forced relocations of people living in mine-affected areas.

The lives, livelihoods and well-being of women and their communities are eroded by these violent resource grabs, increased pollution and deepening militarisation. Militarisation brings with it high levels of sexualised violence against women and girls.

While much has been written about the different forms of violence, dislocations, pollution, destroyed livelihoods and compromised well-being experienced by communities affected by mining, there continues to be a silence around how this violence affects women in specific ways.

This research opens up an important conversation about gendered and sexualised violence in Zimbabwe's mining sector, addressing how the extreme violence of an extractivist development model takes particularly sexualised and highly oppressive forms in relation to women. The research has opened a conversation with women, but not pursued this in great depth or scope in respect for the deep and largely unaddressed trauma women have experienced.

The silences around these forms of violence need to be broken so that women can obtain the redress and justice they define for themselves. This research lays the ground for work well underway in four sites across Zimbabwe to support women's organising and trauma relief ahead of expanded efforts to document and seek substantive redress for women who have suffered the range of violences intrinsic to an extractivist model of development.

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