

Mining destroys Communities and Eco-Systems

We don't often think about how terribly destructive mining practices can be, not only for the environment, but also for local communities. In their rush to make revenues, governments often overlook these considerations.

Mining is big business in Zimbabwe, with mineral exports responsible for 60% of the country's export earnings, and 16% of national GDP. The government has outlined ambitious plans to quadruple the sector's total value to \$12bn by 2023, particularly focussed on platinum extraction.

However, the country's lax licensing laws permit foreign companies to own 100% of a mine licence for any commodity, save platinum and diamonds, in perpetuity.

Mining also severely impacts on indigenous communities and eco systems. Strip mining is particularly destructive. Coal fires can burn for decades, releasing fly ash, toxic chemical and greenhouse gases, such as methane. Coal dust inhalation causes black lung disease among miners and those living nearby.

Mine accidents kill thousands every year. Cardiopulmonary disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, lung disease, and kidney disease have been found in higher-than-normal rates among residents who live near coal mines.

Toxic levels of arsenic, fluorine, mercury, and selenium are emitted by coal fires, entering the air and the food chain of those living nearby.

Christian Aid in Zimbabwe focusses on creating space for citizen and civil society participation in the mining sector through facilitating the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI).

This platform was used to advocate for the adoption of a declaration with specific recommendations, which have been presented to the government for adoption in the amendment of the Mines and Minerals Bill.

The programme increased participation of women and men in mining communities in monitoring the environmental impact of mining companies.

Your Support for Zimbabwe through *Commitment for Life* helps empower these communities to stand up to exploitation and abuse by the mining sector. Thank you for your support. *Pic: Nicholas leClercq Unsplash*

