

UNTOLD STORIES FROM **MINING** COMMUNITIES

A Collection of Stories of Mining Impacts, Community Resilience and their Commitment Towards Defending their Environmental, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



Zimbabwe Environmental
Law Association (ZELA)

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FEMALE ACTIVIST REMAINS DEFIANT IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

RUDO CHAGWEDERA AGED 35 years from Tsuro village in Mutoko North is one of the 12 community members that were convicted in July 2014 following a protest that was staged by 52 community members against natural stone mining company.

The community members were demanding that mining companies should make an attempt to carry out corporate social responsibility activities in the community given their negative environmental, economic and social footprint on the community.

Naturally, the conviction and fining of US\$300 for each of the 12 community members should have sent shivers and crippled community activism but for Rudo it planted a seed of defiance.

Rudo was one of the organisers of the demonstration and on the day of what they called “community action for engagement with mining companies” she took lead to go and challenge the management of Natural Stone mining company to hear out their grievances so that they could come up with collective action to address them.

The mining company was reluctant to accept the request from the communities and no one came to address them. The community members who expected to engage with the mining company were agitated especially given that they have been stood

up by the company several times.

After realizing that the company was not to take any action the community decided to shut down water supply to the mining company and block the roads that give access to the mining site.

Water in granite mining is essential because of the role it plays in facilitating the cutting of the rocks so is road access which facilitates the transportation of the huge blocks of granite to foreign countries for further cutting and polishing to make kitchen tops and tiles that are used in expensive buildings.

The mining company ignored the community action and instead of engaging with communities it called the police who came pouncing on the community members who were latter charged with organizing an illegal demonstration.

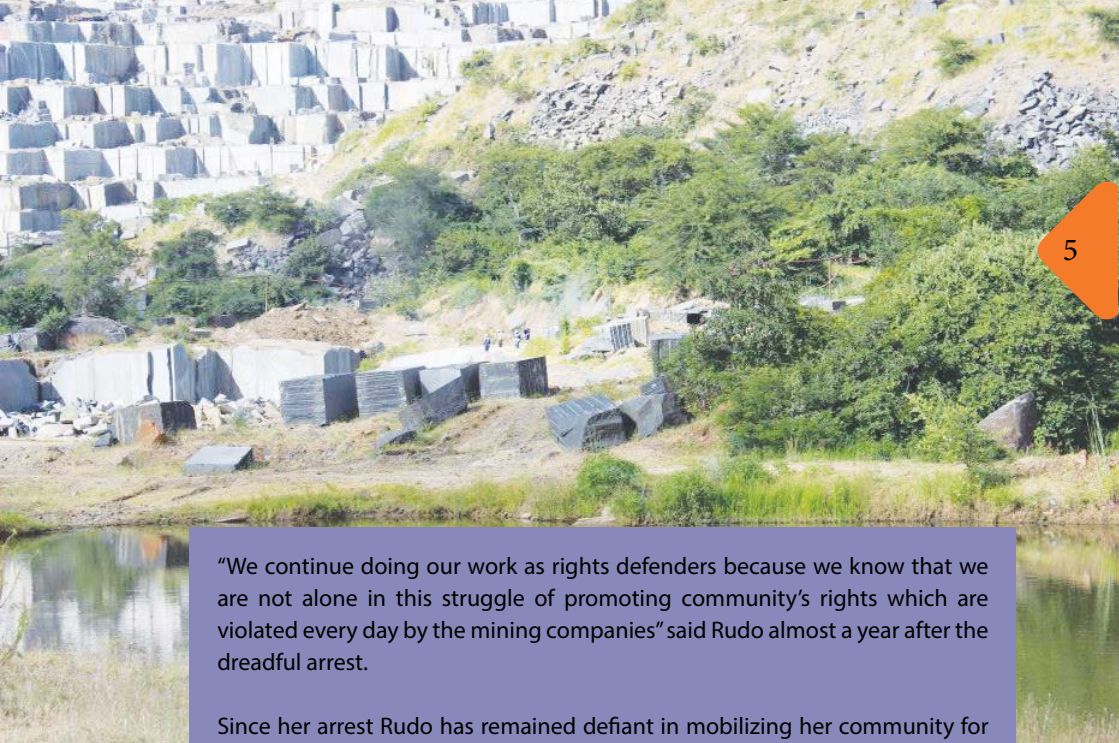
For a community member like Rudo, between paying the steep fine of US\$300 or serving a jail term of six months the most obvious option would have been serving the jail term given the economic challenges. Spending such a long time in prison always has a brunt on activists and in most cases it forces them into silence.

ZELA through its support from Action AID under the Fair Green and Global (FGG) project provided legal aid for the communities, which included paying for their fines.

Defending such human rights activists is important in building resilience in rights defenders because when they understand that in times of persecution they are provided with a safety net.

“*The mining company ignored the community action and instead of engaging with communities it called the police who came pouncing on the community members who were latter charged with organizing an illegal demonstration.*”





“We continue doing our work as rights defenders because we know that we are not alone in this struggle of promoting community’s rights which are violated every day by the mining companies” said Rudo almost a year after the dreadful arrest.

Since her arrest Rudo has remained defiant in mobilizing her community for engagement with the mining companies and the various decision makers so as to push the community’s concerns.

Today, the community of Mutoko is now anticipating the finalization of their own Community Share Ownership Trust Scheme (CSOT), which seeks to ensure that communities benefit from the proceeds that accrue from the mining of resources that are found in their area.

Through the CSOT, the community anticipates to make investments that allow them to enjoy more their economic rights from the mining of granite. Such an outcome is a result of the work of various activists and rights defenders like Rudo who have stood against the odds to challenge the status quo and demand that attention be put on their right to benefit from the natural resource that is found in their area.

Black granite mining activities have been ongoing in Mutoko for over 30 years and have resulted in the damage of roads, heavy dust emissions, vibrations due to dynamite explosions leading to cracking of houses and school buildings, open pits that have claimed lives and loss of agricultural land for market gardening and sacred sites.

Black Granite or marble is used locally or exported for manufacturing floor tiles, tombstones, kitchen tops, pavers and decorating material for high rise buildings in many towns and cities around the world.



66 YEAR OLD MUTOKO WIDOW TAKES CHARGE IN DEMANDING AND EMPOWERING FELLOW WOMEN ON THEIR RIGHTS

JOYCE NJENJE IS a 66 year old widow who stays in Mutoko where granite mining is being conducted. She has 3 sons, 1 daughter, 1 deceased child and 10 grandchildren. Joyce is the bread winner of the family and provides everything for the family to survive. She survives on selling tomatoes and vegetables but lately it is not bringing enough money. Joyce's profile is representative of many female headed household in Mutoko North who rely on informal trading for livelihoods. Like most of the community members, she thought mining companies in her area would assist in generation of extra income through employment creation and or boost their market gardening initiatives by procurement of their fresh vegetables. Mrs Njenje was introduced to ZELA by Honourable Chinomona who is their Member of Parliament for Mutoko North and the Deputy Speaker of Parliament. Hon. Chinomona was trained by ZELA under the Fair Green and Global Project as part of the strategy to target members of Parliament and empower them to strategically support their constituencies to challenge the structural problems attendant to irresponsible mining policies and practices which are causing social injustices and environmentally unsustainable approaches.

Since her interaction with ZELA she has become more aware of issues of rights and responsibilities regards social, economic, cultural and environmental rights which she had no knowledge of prior to her interactions with the organisation and projects. She is now courageous and strongly willing to demand what can make her life better. Joyce had this to say, "I participated well in nominating a leader who I can

trust to make decisions which not only benefit the community and are devoid of corruption, but which ensure that my children and grandchildren will enjoy the economic benefits which come from being born to a community which has an abandonment of mineral resources”.

Joyce who is now a ZELA community monitor and a peer educator has become an inspiration even to other women in the community. She has gone the extra mile, and not only has

she facilitated in cascading the information gained from ZELA on environmental, cultural, social and economic rights, but translated this to meaningful social change to economically empower women in her community through a rotating savings and money lending club. Joyce believes that if women are change drivers in the community and when economically empowered, and sensitised on their rights, they are better able to fight poverty and inculcate environmentally friendly practices which benefit the community as a whole. Through her club which has 20 members they disseminate information and assist members in times of need for example on funerals were they provide catering service and contribute some money for funeral errands. The club also has a poultry project. They are recognised and admired in the community as change agents who have integrated the knowledge gained from ZELA with previous standing social norms to create sustainable systems which respond to present day needs. Joyce now knows that mining companies should give back to the community through developing the host community, and together with other club members are working on approaching the granite mining companies in their area to provide chickens on a larger scale to their canteens and employees. She was glad to hear that their community now has a Community Share Ownership Trust (CSOT) and is interested on how she can assist women and children to benefit from these schemes.

“This program brought hope to us the widows” Joyce said and encouraged civil society organisations to keep working in Kowo (Mutoko North) and to visit the ward in person and come up with more ideas of sustainable development. Joyce has aspirations to become a community leader and not just a community representative. Mrs Njenje also hopes to attend exchange visits so that she can learn what other communities are doing and improve in her community and Country.

They are recognised and admired in the community as change agents who have integrated the knowledge gained from ZELA with previous standing social norms to create sustainable systems which respond to present day needs.





COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATION BRINGS HOPE TO DISPLACED COMMUNITIES

FOLLOWING THE RELOCATION of families from the diamond rich area of Chiadzwa to Arda Transau farm in Mutare north Manicaland Province, villagers came together to form a developmental trust which has become handy in advocating for the welfare of the community.

The trust known as the Arda Transau Relocation Development Trust (ATRDT) has already made inroads in developing the area despite lacking proper funding for its day to day operations.

The trust has its leadership comprising of 17 people of which eight are women whose mandate is to see development moving fast in the area.

Chairperson of the trust Cephass Gwaya Gwaya (44) narrated how the trust came about, its achievements so far as well as hardships they are facing to smoothly execute their duties.

“ATRDT came about after our harassment by the five mining companies that relocated us here. Some of the issues we had were not properly handled and some people sought to block us from meeting the relevant authorities in government” said Gwaya Gwaya.

This story was written before the sudden passing on of Cephass Gwaya Gwaya on the 1st of September 2015. May his soul rest in peace. His work, and contributions shall forever be cherished.

Vice chairperson for ATRDT Clara Magobeya (40) said although it was hard to work in the area, they did not lose hope especially after being registered through and having attended workshops conducted by the Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA) which empowered them with knowledge on how they must work and engage local leaders for all the problems they faced. ZELA is an ActionAid Zimbabwe partner that is working in the area to assist the communities to realise their economic, environmental, social and cultural rights.

“We were empowered by the workshops conducted by ZELA and that kept us going. We engaged some of the leaders in the Province and I still remember at one of the workshops my presentation forced some leaders to come and see for themselves what we were going through and they reacted”, she said.

Despite working on a shoe string budget which is mostly money from the committee members, the trust has managed to transform lives in the community through paying of water bills to families’ whose supplies had been cut off due to ballooning arrears. They have also managed to pay medical bills for one Zachaeus Dube who was recently operated of a growth on his head.

Not only did the trust bring foodstuffs for older persons and vulnerable children but had also managed to meet the Provincial state minister Honorabe Mandy Chimene who has promised to work out some solutions for their problems.

“So far we have done our part in trying to bring sanity to this community. There are a number of issues we have managed to address that include identifying some families who were living in squalid conditions such as that of a Johani Kambeni, a polygamous man with 14 wives who was given a single house with fourteen bedrooms instead of houses equivalent to his family.

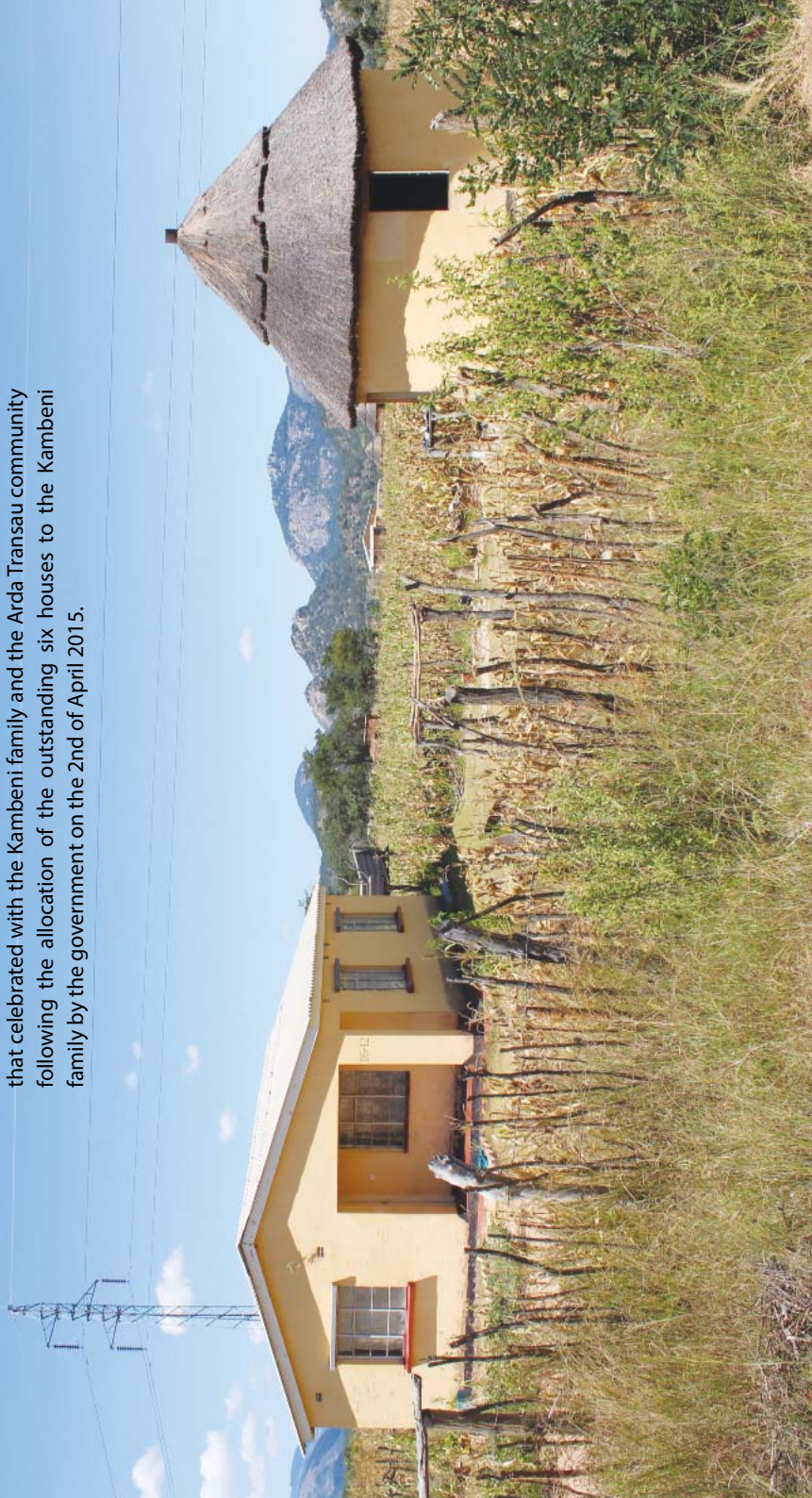
“There are some houses built by Marange Resources which are yet to be occupied and we engaged responsible authorities so that those who are still squashed can get those. So far a total number of 173 families are in need of houses and we are sure they will get those houses.” Mrs Magobeya said.

Although the trust has achieved this much, they have some challenges chief among them is the lack of funds. All the money they use comes from contributions made by members of the committee as they try to get things going.

Another challenge they mentioned was the issue of electricity which they said could help them start self help projects such as welding and carpentry among others.

BEYOND KAMBENI'S HOUSING RESOLVE: ARDA-TRANSAU A TICKING TIME BOMB

The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) was amongst those that celebrated with the Kambeni family and the Arda Transau community following the allocation of the outstanding six houses to the Kambeni family by the government on the 2nd of April 2015.



The allocation of the outstanding houses comes after 4 years of continued hassles with Anjin (the company that reallocated them) and the government representatives including the District Administrator and the Minister of State responsible for provincial affairs.

Kambeni has featured in various media since 2011 following the relocation of his family to Arda where he was not allocated adequate accommodation to house his family of 14 wives and 80 children.

Although the allocation of adequate housing to the family is a positive outcome of the various advocacy and lobbying by the family, the Arda Transau Relocation Development Trust (ATRDT) and the various civil society organizations, ZELA celebrates this as remedy to rights violated.

More importantly, the allocation of adequate houses should not shift attention from other concerns of the family and the community.

The sad story of the Kambeni family should stand as a key reminder on the importance of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before relocation of communities to allow for mining operations.

FPIC is the principle that states that a community has the right to give or withhold its consent to proposed projects that may affect the lands they customarily own, occupy or otherwise use.

FPIC can be used to alleviate misunderstandings about land ownership, safeguard indigenous sovereignty, ensure fair dealing, and formulate relationships built on trust. Had FPIC principles been followed, the relocated communities would have had an opportunity to air their concerns and even suggest their minimal requirements for relocation, which would have averted any future challenges.

Prior to their relocation, communities from Marange were given only two weeks notice resulting in them leaving their (almost ripe) farm produce, adequate housing and established means of livelihood against their will.

"We had to leave our produce which was almost ready for harvest as we were promised that everything we ever need was there in Arda", said Idah, Kambeni's 9th wife during an interview with ZELA.

“When we insisted to come back for our produce the mining company told us that they will give us transport to go back but they never did, so we simply lost everything we had worked for to passersby who would just eat as they wish” she continued.

The government should have invested enough time for the communities to prepare for the relocation so that they would enjoy a better transition into the new community but instead their approach sidelined communities and brewed conflict from the onset.

During an Interview with ZELA, Gwayagwaya the chairperson of ATRDT said “the first day of arrival was a day of disillusionment for most community members who had received promises that everything would be provided to meet their needs in the new community.”

The communities were promised food provisions especially given the short notice that they were given to vacate their homes and their yields that were still to be harvested.

The allocated food was too little and standardised for everyone, even the Kambeni family was allocated the same foodstuffs, which included 4kgs of sugar and 4 liters of cooking oil, which the 14 wives had to divide.

It is important to mention that the Kambeni family besides its size was a family that could adequately meet its needs and could self sustain before the relocation.

One of the dictates of Kambeni’s religion is that children and women offer labor to support production for the family and as such the bigger the family the bigger its capacity to produce.

Besides the paltry food rations that were given to each family another form of compensation was a once off payment of US\$1000 disturbance allowance per each family.

Although this figure was low considering the losses that the communities endured due to the relocations it was worse for bigger families like Kambeni. For such big families the disturbance allowance could not translate to anything of significance that could assist them.

Up to now families in Arda languish over the relocation to allow an economic venture that went on to make millions after they themselves received a meager disturbance allowance.

A ticking time bomb is the issue of land ownership and tenure in the Arda community that has since been semi-urbanized.

The communities who received at most 1 hectare per family have suddenly find themselves with inadequate land for productive farming and that coupled with a change in the weather has affected their crop production and animal rearing.

Although the community set up is almost urban, the community still relies on subsistence farming and firewood as a source of energy, which in itself presents contradictions that need redress.

In their new home, growth is restricted because from the onset there was miscounting as a household was counted as one whilst in other instances there would be two families per household given the dynamic that brothers or sons can stay with their older brother or their father and get married and be allocated their own space to build houses for their family. Unfortunately because of a flawed counting system, such families were counted as one and allocated one household with five rooms and a kitchen. Now that the families are growing the problem is aggravating.

Currently illegal settlements are mushrooming adjacent to the relocation site and these are a result of the growing families that can no longer be accommodated at the allocated home.

Access to water remain a thorny issue in Arda, the piped water which communities were promised to be provided through payments that would be made by the mining companies is now being charged at \$5 every month for each household.

Furthermore the communities languish over the unfulfilled promise for irrigation. The irrigation was supposed to allow them to start productive farming including market gardening so that they can support their own livelihood.

After spending some time with the people from Arda Transau, one can observe some underlying anger towards the government and business corporates on unfulfilled promises.

It could be important for government to consider efforts towards psychosocial interventions that can allow these communities to vent out its anger and also allow them to contribute to their social and economic outlook given that they never had an opportunity to do so prior to their relocation.

Without such a process it is more likely that the relocated communities will propagate generations and generations of community members that feel betrayed which will have a bearing on community and state relations for generations to come. Although on the surface the people of Arda might appear appeased with what they have, talking to them openly shows some deep anger that can denigrate to negative peace, which has a potential of escalation.

For the community, the resolve of the Kambeni issue should give enough impetus to do more, to challenge government further on its promises and forge ahead until their concerns are addressed.

The outcome of the Kambeni's dispute is an embodiment of how engagement can work especially with arms of government. It justifies the need for further engagements especially on the promises that the government made itself.

Engagement however cannot be the magic bullet and as such it cannot overshadow other approaches that are necessary for the community to gain momentum on its advocacy.

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Overall, it is high time that the mining companies start to seriously consider social licensing as a critical issue that can facilitate or threaten their operations in communities. The concept of Social License to Operate (SLO) refers to the level of acceptance or approval by local communities and stakeholders of mining companies and their operations.

ATRDT is representing about 826 households with an estimated population of 4000 people.

WOMAN IN HOUSING BREAKTHROUGH AS SHE FIGHTS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

SEVENTY THREE (73) YEAR old woman Idah Kambeni of Arda Transau, Odzi Mutare District, and Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe has broken the norm in her community by championing the rights of women who were displaced to pave way for commercial mining ventures in the area.

Idah's family is among the 800 families and an estimated 4000 people moved from Marange mining area between 2011 and 2015 and resettled at Arda Transau following the discovery of diamonds in Manicaland. She is the 9th wife of Johani Kambeni (90) who is married to 14 wives. All the wives, who each had own homesteads in Marange, were literally dumped at Arda Transau farm in Odzi, without a roof over their shoulder. The family is part of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Church sect, whose culture promotes polygamy which normally leads to the subordination of women.



The fact that she was wife number nine could have discouraged Idah from taking lead in fighting for the rights of other women. Generally in polygamous situations, first wives wield more power than the other wives which follow and wife number 9 could as well be regarded peripheral. Idah, who is a mother of five children and has a total of nine grandchildren, is currently looking after two of her grandchildren who are orphans.

“The people who moved us did not count the wives as different households because we are married to one man and imagine having 14 households sharing one house.”

“On 27 February 2011, trucks organised by Anjin Diamond Mine Company dumped the 14 of us with our children at a former compound at Arda Transau where we spent the next 16 days sleeping in the open and getting rained along the process. We were later moved to a former farm compound where we shared one house. Prior to leaving Marange, we had been promised that each wife will be provided a three bedroomed house. Other people who were transported after us were allocated their houses.

“The people who moved us did not count the wives as different households because we are married to one man and imagine having 14 households sharing one house. Even those who provided us food rations considered us as one household. The food was not enough for all of us and we were stuck with children who were hungry all the time,” said Idah. The Kambeni children are estimated to be over 70 and the grandchildren are in hundreds.

She said Anjin gave her husband US\$1000 as compensation for displacement for “one” household and the wives shared it with each given US\$60. Idah’s husband owned 65 cattle and 300 goats prior to coming to Arda Transau and these have all been sold to buy basics for the big family.

Fruitless efforts were made to contact the local District Administrator who did not assist Idah and the rest of the Kambeni wives. Idah’s family and the others continued to live in the squalid conditions at the farm compound for almost five years until a part breakthrough was spearheaded by Idah in September 2014.

“In 2012, I got exposed to the Arda Transau Relocation Development Trust (ATRDT) which enabled me to attend the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) various workshops. I was taught about my rights as a person who was affected by mining displacements. ZELA linked us to lawyers who told us we had a right to having our own house,” she said.

Following some engagements with the DA and Anjin representatives, Johani Kambeni was allocated a single house with 14 bedrooms and separate kitchens in form of huts. Idah and the other wives rejected this arrangement saying that it violated their right to privacy as prior to coming to Arda Transau; the women had their own houses.

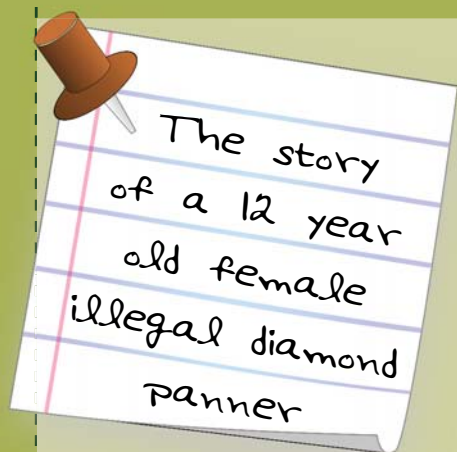
“After attending a Mining Indaba organised by ZELA on 1 August 2014, I felt motivated to demand my rights. I lead seven other Kambeni wives and invaded three bedroomed houses that were vacant although we did not have keys to the houses. The houses were built by Anjin and one wonders who was supposed to occupy them. We stayed outside the houses for 16 days and vowed to stay there until we were given keys.”

With help from a lawyer facilitated by ATRDT and legal aid from ZELA, the eight women got keys to the houses in August 2015 after staying in the open for 16 days. They have occupied the houses till today. Idah’s battle was not yet over as there were still six more wives of the 14 who were still living at the farm compound.

In October 2014, Idah lead the remaining six wives in demonstrations which saw them occupying houses belonging to school teachers. “The six women and their children left the compound to stay at the teachers’ houses to push government to do something about their situation,” said Idah. The six were finally allocated houses in April 2015, which brought some relief to the families which were homeless for over five years.

"I am happy that all the Kambeni wives have shelter now. However there are still many families who do not have accommodation and with help of ATRDT we will continue engaging the local authorities and Anjin to ensure that they are allocated houses."

Cephas Gwayagwaya, chairperson of ATRDT said out of the 826 households resettled at Arda Transau 110 has no accommodation. "The bulk of the families with no houses belong to the Apostolic Sect Church who are in polygamous set ups. Most of the affected are women who have to share houses with other wives in the polygamous set ups."



FOR RUVARASHE MAKARICHI (18) of Murai Village in Marange, Mutare District, Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe, the discovery of diamond in her community brought nothing much than misery in her life.

At age 12, pushed by the need to help her father to look after her ailing mother and pay school fees for herself and siblings, Ruvarashe dropped out of school in search of the precious stone to become an illegal diamond

panner. She may have been the first ever female to be engaged in illegal diamond activities at such a tender age.

Ruvarashe has earned herself a locally constructed colloquial name entitled "Gwejeline", which means "female illegal diamond panner," something she is not proud of. The name originates from another colloquial name for male illegal diamond panner called "Gweja". The diamond was discovered some 18km away from her home in 2008 when she was doing Grade 7.

The discovery of diamond in Zimbabwe disrupted the life of people in Marange and surrounding areas resulting in many children dropping out of school while some community members saw themselves involved in uncouth activities to make ends meet. The diamond came at a time when Zimbabwe's economic situation had tumbled. To make matters worse thousands of people were displaced and at the same time enduring the environmental degradation and pollution that have become the order of day due to mining explorations by mining companies.

"My father was failing to raise school fees for myself and my brother. My mother is asthmatic. I decided to join a group of 10 illegal diamond panners to go and steal diamond from a firm that was operating in our area. I was the youngest from the group of 10 people, four of whom were female while the rest were men mostly in their early 20s."

"Security guards helped us to steal diamond residues at night. We slept in mountains in the afternoon and at night we will go and pounce at the diamond mining firm," Ruvarashe, who is the first child in a family of three children said.

Asked where she got the guts of doing such a daring job as a young girl and if her father had allowed her to leave home, she said:

"The situation at home gave me the courage and my father too had no choice but to leave me because there was no food at home and we were being sent back home from school after failing to pay school fees."

Asked if she was not afraid of being attacked by wild animals while staying in the bush, she said:

"I was not afraid of snakes because we slept in the afternoon and went searching for the diamond at night. At one point I went back home after staying for three days in the bush and after discovering that one young man from our group had been killed and we thought he had been murdered."

"After staying home for a few days, I realised there was no hope and I went back to live in the bush. The longest time I stayed in the bush was three months," she said.

Despite the dangers involved in her new source of income, Ruvarashe said, she failed to raise school fees for herself and other siblings. Ruvarashe had one big nightmare which made her stop the dangerous game for good.

"I was afraid of being raped. I heard of some women who had been raped and I decided enough was enough. I went home with nothing and after having lost one school term, I went back to school. My school fees was now being paid by my mother's sister."

Ruvarashe, who has since sat for her O level examinations in 2013, passed four subjects and is planning on supplementing Maths and English.

"Although my aunt paid school fees, there are times when she failed and I was sent back home. I could have done better in school. I also had no text books and this affected my studies," said Ruvarashe.

Speaking during a Mining Indaba organised by the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) in Mutare in June 2015, Ruvarashe said many schools in Marange had poor infrastructure, limited text books and stationery while orphans failed paying school fees forcing many girls to drop out of school to marry at a young age. She said mining companies operating in this area had between 2011 and 2012 provided food hampers only to community members.

"There are many orphans who lost their parents due to HIV and AIDS which they got from people who came to work at the mines. Mining companies should assist these children by paying school fees and buying text books for them for communities to see the benefits of diamonds. My father applied several times to work at the mines but he failed just like many other locals who are being denied employment opportunities," said Ruvarashe who is now a board member for the Marange Development Trust.

ZELA has since 2010 supported members of the Marange Development Trust and other communities affected by mining operations in Zimbabwe with registration and on educating them on their economic, environmental and cultural rights and as well as providing them with legal representation.

Communities in mining areas remain enslaved in a cycle of poverty with locals not being employed by mining companies while there is poor service delivery, education, health, and water both in relocation and the mining areas. Pollution, land degradation, and limited housing options for some displaced members of communities especially women and children are the order of the day. There are also limited livelihood options for those displaced by mining activities.



Houses
crack as
hundreds become
homeless while
livelihoods are
threatened

LEARNMORE MUZVIDZWA (41) AND his wife Shupikai Muzvidzwa (33) of Arda Transau, Mutare District Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe are leaving under a cloud of uncertainty as their house is cracking. The family was allocated the three bedroomed houses in 2012 following their relocation from Marange diamond mining area. The three bedroomed houses was built by the Diamond Mining Company (DMC) as part of the housing compensation after moving the family to make way for the company's mining businesses in Marange.

The bulk of the houses allocated by DMC are cracking and a total of 43 households with an estimated population of 250 people could end up with no homes. The houses are cracking due to poor quality materials used to construct the houses. The Muzvidzwas have three children and one of the children has cerebral pulse.

In addition to the housing nightmare, the Muzvidzwa family, like many other families relocated at Arda Transau, have no reliable source of income, making it hard for them to buy basics such as food and payment of school fees for their children.



"We have failed to raise money to buy a wheelchair for our son who has cerebral pulse because we have no reliable source of income. I survive on selling firewood and earn about US\$5 in two weeks. We cannot afford to buy fertilisers as the soils here are poor and as a result we have limited food at home," said Learnmore.

The cutting down of trees for survival at Arda Transau and other areas people were resettled following mining related displacements have caused havoc to the environment. Environmental Management Agency (EMA) remain mum on this matter as they find it difficult to pounce on these communities that were relocated in an area with little or no livelihoods options. The government Agency, EMA which has limited budgets and capacity is even failing to curtail bigger environmental catastrophes caused by commercial mining operations.

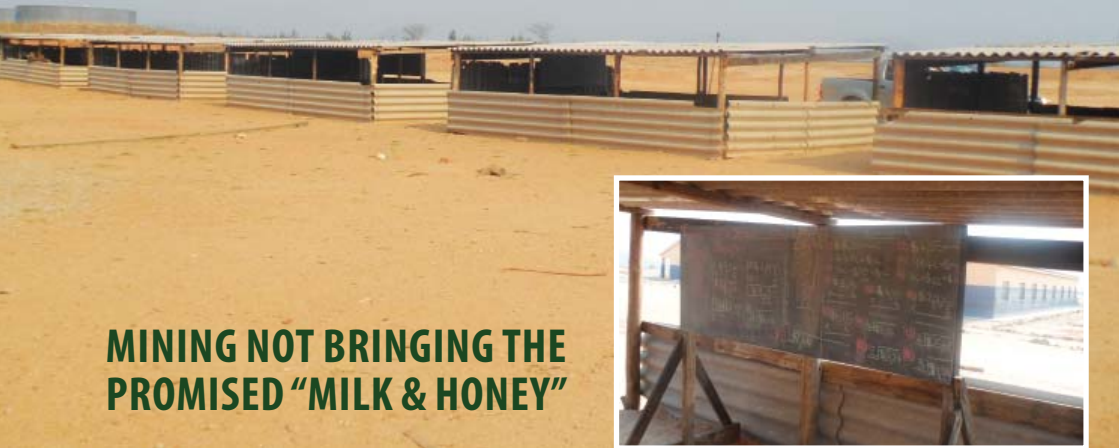
"We have lost 15 goats since we came to Arda Transau because the area is not suitable for breeding livestock. Our main source of income in Marange was livestock. We have also sold some of our livestock for food and school fees. When you try to engage in garden projects here, you end up stuck because the protected deep wells supplied by DMC sometimes run dry. About 6 households share a deep well," said Learnmore.

Shupikai said her son's condition requires that she uses a lot of water as he relieves on himself and the limited water in the area makes life a living hell for her.

Learnmore is a board member for Arda Transau Relocation Development Trust (ATRDT), which has been advocating for the welfare of the community members affected by the displacements. ATRDT has been working with the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA), an ActionAid Zimbabwe partner in proving Arda Transau and other communities affected by mining operations in educating communities on their economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

Mining companies have done lip service to communities by providing some token food aid while leaving communities exposed economically, socially, environmentally and culturally.





MINING NOT BRINGING THE PROMISED “MILK & HONEY”

THE PERIRE FAMILY was relocated from Marange to Arda Transau in 2011. The late Ephraim Perire left 4 wives who now live in Arda Transau. 85 year old Erina Perire is the first wife and out of her 10 children she is left with 5 children and 22 grandchildren. Her daughter Judith is the one that takes care of her. Erina narrates how their rights were violated when they were asked to relocate few days after burying their husband. According to their culture as Ephraim`s wives they had to stay a week plus to bid farewell. Instead she only received US\$ 1000 as disturbance allowance. Upon arriving to the new location she was given a house and she is glad that her house is next to the other wives of her husband. Promises made by diamond mining companies still remain a fantasy as nothing was given to them. Anjin Diamond Company only gave them two 50kgs of maize, 2kgs sugar, 2litres oil, 1kg salt and 1kg beans three times.

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Cecelia Perire who is the second wife stated that before they left for Arda, mining companies promised them milk and honey and looked forward to the better life. The 68 year old has 4 children and lost 3 children before she came to Arda. Her life has become hard as she has no field to plough on and the land is infertile without the aid of fertilisers. Back in Chiadzwa they used to plough sorghum and inputs were less as the land adapted well to the plant. Cecelia claims she had so much livestock but now she has nothing at all. At the moment she only has one goat which is a sign of poverty in the African setup.

Beside all the tragedy of being moved, the 4 sisters are glad that their petition of getting houses close was granted. This has made them to

help each other in times of need just like the old days. In Chiadzwa they stayed together and they now feel separated though a bit close.

52 year old Sarah Perire is the fourth wife to Mr Perire. Her main worry lies with allocation of houses. Her 6 sons managed to get only one house. This means 6 families are squashed in the 4 roomed house. Such situation is unhealthy as it generates a lot of conflict amongst the women who all want some level of authority. Sarah and her daughter in laws survive by selling wood to people along the highway and to the Odzi community.

Verina Perire said the land given to them is not big enough to sustain the family. Her grandchildren and co wife`s grandchildren do not go to school because the family cannot afford to pay school fees of \$15 per pupil at primary level and \$45 for secondary students. At some point the children were on Beam but were removed. The family survives largely from donations by people in the area especially the Arda Relocation Development Trust (ARDT).

The Perire sisters looked forward to having electricity as it was promised but never fulfilled. Anjin also promised to supply irrigation system so that the community could utilise it in producing better yield. They also complain that the houses were depreciating and Anjin refused to renovate them.

Community members living in Arda Transau face a lot of challenges in terms of water supply. When they were moved from Chiadzwa, water was also part of the promised benefits. To their surprise rural life has turned into urban life where they should pay for service. Judith Perire has been finding difficulties in taking care of her mother. ZINWA cut off their water meter due to lack of payment. They are charged \$5 a month and the family cannot afford to pay the bill. They survive by drinking water from a stream in the garden. Though the water is not safe, there is no other means as people refuse to give them water. The water situation pains the Perire family because back in Chiadzwa they had boreholes which they used and provided them with safe water.

The family recommended diamond companies to build better infrastructures for school and buy furniture as the school is too small and some children learn in cabins. They also wish for Beam support for their grandchildren to be able to attend school. Cecelia hopes the government can provide the elderly with food support and water. Young people should be given money to start projects like livestock rearing so as to get extra money.

OLDER PERSONS BEAR BRUNT OF RELOCATION

AS MINING COMPANIES RENEGADE ON PROMISES



AFTER SPENDING THEIR entire savings on developing their families in their forefather's land in Marange area where diamonds were discovered a decade ago, older persons in the community had nothing to worry about as they were happy that their siblings will find somewhere to lean on as they start their families too.

But things changed swiftly as the 'diamond rush' which started with people from the area and attracted other Zimbabweans as well as people from the world over to come and scramble for this precious mineral thereby causing many problems including land degradation in the area.

Companies were not left out as they joined in the diamond rush to mine on a large scale and to presumably bring the much needed development in the area as well as the country.

That was when misery for the older persons started. They were to be relocated to make way for these mining companies.

Speaking to an ActionAid communication team recently, older persons relocated to Arda Transau, a farm that was allocated to the mining firms so they can develop it in compensation for land they had taken as they started mining.

"We had developed our homesteads well than what you see here. There were orchards on our yards, our buildings were of high quality and the space was big. We used our land sparingly knowing our children were growing and would use it."

"Our problems came about after the discovery of diamonds in Marange's Chiadzwa area which we thought was a blessing but it latter turned to be a curse."

"We are still traumatized by the way we were relocated. We were not given enough time to pack our things and some of our goods were broken in transit. The mining companies promised to pay us compensation but up to now we have got nothing except the US\$ 1000 they paid us as disturbance fees and nothing else", was all Erina Perire (80) could say.

Another older person who spoke to this publication, Elisha Matanguro, bemoaned the lack of commitment from the mining companies to fulfill their promises saying they want them to die poor.

“My story is a riches to rags ordeal. I had over fifty cattle, seventy goats and 300 free range chickens. When we were relocated, I brought some of my livestock here but they succumbed to diseases and died. I sold some of my livestock to make ends meet as I was beginning to establish here.

“Yes we were given some already built three bed roomed houses and round huts but those could not be compared to how some of us had built our homesteads in Chiadzwa.

“Most of the older persons here are widowed women and taking care of orphaned grandchildren who still need our care. Some children are now dropping out of school as we are in school fees arrears at the schools dating back to 2011. Life is very hard here for older persons.”

Asked what they had been promised by the mining companies that include Marange Resources, Mbada, Jinan, Anjin and Diamond Mining Corporation (DMC), Matanguro said they had been promised compensation, electrification of their homesteads, getting some assistance for five years and help to start irrigation schemes in the area which did not happen.

“We only got our disturbance allowances, some food supplies which were very little and the houses they built for us.”

He also said if they are to get any help from well wishers it will be much appreciated. “We need to start our projects such as poultry and irrigation; we appeal to those that may help us to fund these projects. If we are to get machinery for irrigation the better, even as the government embarks on the mechanization program I think it must prioritize us,” he said.

These projects will help the aged in getting an income that will help them pay for their needs. Currently most households belonging to older persons do not have water after they were cut off because of non-payment of bills.

The relocation to Arda Transau has somewhat imposed a “harsh” urban life to some of the community members who were used to an affordable rural life. The houses built by Anjin have tape water installed where each household is expected to pay about US\$5 per month to the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) for the water, which is new to them as they were used to free water in Marange where they were staying in a rural set up.

About 121 households have had their water supplies cut off because of failure to pay the monthly ZINWA water charges, the majority being older women, mostly widowed who have no source of income. From the 121, 60 are households headed by widows. Those whose water supplies were cut are now resorting to drinking water from unprotected sources, posing a health hazard to them.



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