

Women, patriarchy, capitalist interests and the mining sector in Zimbabwe

Manase Kudzai Chiweshe and Sandra Bhatasara
University of Zimbabwe, Sociology Department

Introduction

- ▶ It is generally argued that mining is a masculine endeavour, making the male mine as the normal.
- ▶ It has a long-established image as a display of human power and masculinity (Gier and Mercier 2006) and a site for the reproduction of patriarchal values.
- ▶ Furthermore, the available fragmented literature predominantly implies that women are of secondary importance, placing their participation on the periphery, and marginalizing their achievements in the sector.
- ▶ This primarily ignores women's agency and how they navigate this male-dominated or masculine mining terrain.
- ▶ Equally, this downplays how women can sustain their livelihoods within this sector.

State of gender in the mining sector

- ▶ Mining is the fastest growing sector in Zimbabwe with a growth rate of 40% in the last three years, contributing an estimated 47% to the GDP (Mining Review Report 2014).
- ▶ In spite of a plethora of economic empowerment frameworks women remain at the periphery of the mining sector. In the gold value chain for instance, women constitute about 10%.
- ▶ Mining is not only masculinised, but to some degree securitized
- ▶ Looking at the gender dynamics, women are more likely to operate as informal miners than males because of structural impediments to mining claims acquisition (ZELA 2016).
- ▶ The challenges related to mining transparency and accountability permeates the whole mining industry, including in the generation and use of mining revenues and payments which have been shrouded in secrecy.
- ▶ Transparency International Zimbabwe (2012) established that politicians, notably senior male government ministers and officials were implicated in most corrupt activities concerning the extraction

Women's roles mining in Zimbabwe

- ▶ From an intersectionality theory, women's roles in mining are multiple just as are their identities.
- ▶ Bradshaw et al (2017) allude to the fluidity of women's identities as workers, 'whores' and wives.
- ▶ Ministry of Women Affairs (2013) -women are involved in the mining sector as entrepreneurs, workers and members of communities affected by mining operations but they still derive limited benefits because they are still marginally represented in the sector.
- ▶ A study by PACT (2015) women in mining areas engage in rudimentary, illegal and informal mining for their livelihood and sustenance
- ▶ Less commonly, women are concession owners, mine operators, dealers and buying agents, and equipment owners.
- ▶ The so called 'local' gold buyers are, more often than not, front men acting on behalf of big chiefs in government, political party or business
- ▶ Only 15 % of the 50 000 artisanal gold miners in the small scale mining sector are women while 80% of the small scale gold and gemstone claims belong to men.

Women's roles mining in Zimbabwe

- ▶ As well, 95 % of women in gold mining are in the small scale sector, while 55% of illegal gold panners are women (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development 2011).
- ▶ Again 70 percent of the 25 000 Small Scale Miners registered under the Zimbabwe Miners Federation (ZMF) are into gold mining.
- ▶ According to Ncube (2015) there are over 400 000 unregistered artisanal gold miners in Zimbabwe and an estimated 153 000 miners are women and children.
- ▶ In Donjani/Zhombe and Mbizo only 10% of women are registered with the Mining Commissioners and only 15% of registered small-scale miners are women.
- ▶ Opportunities for employment became limited to the patron's own political clients, who are mostly men
- ▶ In these informalised spaces women also engage in transactional sex eg in Chimanimani, Chpinge, Buhera, Chakari and Gokwe
- ▶ Beyond the victim discourse- women increasingly applying for mining licences and seeking to invest in mining projects (diamond mining, cutting and polishing, coal and tantalite mining)

Structural and cultural norms: barriers to women

- ▶ Extractive industries are strongly patriarchal sites but the women affected by the extractives sector and associated patriarchal structures are not a homogenous group (Bradshaw et.al., 2017).
- ▶ In a Zimbabwean gold mining community of Penhalonga, women are not allowed to venture into gold mining activities or even to touch mining tools as it is believed that their presence will make gold disappear.
- ▶ Disallows women from physical access as mine peggers as well ownership rights to mines, and they are prejudiced when they try to acquire gold claims
- ▶ Mwase (2016) found that in Murowa, men and women are employed using the lottery process, but some married women are forbidden by their husbands from working for the mine.
- ▶ Women are more likely to operate as informal miners than males because of structural impediments to mining claims acquisition (ZELA 2016).
- ▶ Chimhepo (2012) argued that even when some women have mining claims, they are not allowed to go anywhere near the mining site and they have to rely on male workers.
- ▶ Corruption, lack of transparency and accountability- in cases where large bribes are demanded, some women may not afford them, but end up paying using their bodies, a practice termed 'sextortion'

The convergence of patriarchy and capitalist interests

- ▶ Zimbabwean government can be regarded as a patriarchal state to a greater extent as most of its policies are biased towards men and have a more detrimental and exclusionary effect on women.
- ▶ The state's strategies in the mining sector are made out of interests of capital (internal and external)
- ▶ The 'real' capitalists are members of the ruling elite who have control over the means of production through the party-state (Mawowa, 2013)
- ▶ For instance, privatising minerals such as Marange Diamonds was based on a combination of selfish patriarchal and capitalist entitlements of top government, and security structures officials.
- ▶ Effectively prevented community members including women from accessing the diamond fields.
- ▶ Securitization of mine fields through deployment of soldiers and police officers (mostly men) ensures that it is mostly men who can get access to the mining fields.
- ▶ Patriarchy and the party elite accumulation reinforces male domination and female exclusion by concentrating mineral wealth and property into the hands of a few men

The convergence of patriarchy and capitalist interests

- ▶ Violence is another structure that can be used by patriarchy to subjugate women (Walby 1990).
- ▶ Continued instrumentalization of disorder and violence that scholars have alluded to (see Chabal and Caloz, 1999) through coercive state apparatus is evident
- ▶ Mining spaces (especially informal) as violent spaces
- ▶ Even press reports show an increasingly violent space which is characterised by machete wars between male rival gangs and the involvement of political mine-lords or godfathers in the control of artisanal gold mining
- ▶ During state security operations against informal diamond and gold miners by the military and police officers in various parts of Zimbabwe women also suffer a lot.
- ▶ Women experience a number of challenges such as victimisation by male miners, dispossession of their claims, and various other forms of gender-based violence, resulting in many women fearing to venture into mining.
- ▶ Bradshaw et al (2017) also argued that the male capitalist elites who control extractives benefit from their workers being able to command and control women.
- ▶ Mawowa (2013)- in Toronto, Kwekwe informal miners are thwarted using combination of violence (using local police and youth militia), political and legal manipulation
- ▶ It has also been noted that overlapping mining claims, double or multiple claim allocation increases women vulnerabilities to violence (Mutonhori and Sibanda, 2017).

Gendered analysis of legal, institutional and policy frameworks

- ▶ The new Zimbabwe constitution provides for economic rights and gender parity as well as an opportunity for sector legislative and policy reforms.
- ▶ An important law that supports gender balance and equal opportunity in economic issues is the Public Entities Corporate Governance Act
- ▶ However, despite these provisions the mining sector is operating outside the Constitutions.
- ▶ The Mines and Minerals Act and the Gold Act among others have colonial remnants that impede the incorporation of women in mining
- ▶ Gold Act has clauses that control the provision of gold mining licenses and how they are used. The act impedes gold mining activities of women because they are arrested if caught pounding, selling or transporting gold.
- ▶ Mwase (2016) observed that another weakness of the act is that it does not force mining companies to use or lose their mining rights.
- ▶ EMAs failure to monitor environmental impact of mining activities once companies start their mining activities render initial efforts futile as environmental degradation continues. Women are mostly affected.
- ▶ The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act - did not have a quota system or affirmative action measures that empower women and girls.

Gendered analysis of legal, institutional and policy frameworks

- ▶ Section 14(b) of Statutory Instrument 21 of 2010 provides for the establishment of Community Share Ownership Trusts (CSOTS) which shall hold shares in qualifying businesses on behalf of their respective communities.
- ▶ Experiences in Mhondoro-Ngezi highlight how CSOT remain influenced by the dominant patriarchal system.
- ▶ Women have one representative out of 15 members of the CSOT.
- ▶ The CSOTs are chaired by traditional chiefs who are the bastion of cultural practices much of which are detrimental to women's rights.
- ▶ The SI was did not have a quota system or affirmative action measures that empower women and girls.
- ▶ This made men who occupy leadership positions as traditional and community leaders to benefit from the Community Share Ownership Trusts (CSOT), while segregating women.
- ▶ The Ministry of Mines and Mining Development, and its various boards are led by men and the mining legislation does not explicitly consider differentiated gender needs
- ▶ Most worrying is that the Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill is in limbo.

Conclusions and recommendations

- ▶ The mining sector has largely remained unreconstructed since 1980, thereby providing little opportunities for women to be mine owners or workers.
- ▶ The future of women thus remains bleak despite the change the repeated pronouncement of a new dispensation
- ▶ Novel interventions then focusing on promoting women's rights and economic empowerment are needed if there is any chance to confront the increasingly growing male supremacist ideologies and neo-liberal developmental trajectory the country is currently pursuing.