

# CNRG COVID-19 MINING AFFECTED COMMUNITIES SITUATION UPDATE

By *cnrg.admin* Posted April 2, 2020 In Campaigns

## Introduction

COVID-19 has disrupted the livelihood patterns of rural communities in Zimbabwe and it is of interest to CNRG to document the developments, especially in places affected by extractive industries around the country.

Zimbabwe has not been spared by the global pandemic, COVID-19, which, according to the World Health Organisation, has affected a total of 882,068 and claimed 44, 136 lives across the world. Zimbabwe has recorded a total of eight positive cases and one death. On Friday, 27 March 2020, President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced a national lockdown which was designed to curb the spread of the virus. However, prior to the lockdown, Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) had already announced its decision to activate virtual offices and work remotely. This was to ensure safety of CNRG staff, stakeholders and the general public.

CNRG has running projects in nine sites across Zimbabwe, namely Marange (diamonds), Mutoko (black granite), Penhalonga in Mutasa (gold), Hwange (coal and animal conservancies), Chivi (diamonds), Bikita (lithium), Darwendale (platinum and chrome), Arda Transu (relocated from Marange to pave way for diamond mining), and Lupane (timber and animal conservancies). The economic benefits of natural resources exploitation tend to flow to national capitals, foreign shareholders and ruling elites whilst host communities become more and more vulnerable.

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The COVID-19 pandemic is therefore an additional strain to the already burdened locals in these communities. For that reason, CNRG pledged to continue monitoring how these communities are impacted by COVID-19 and how they are responding to it and measures announced by the government of Zimbabwe. We also monitor how these measures affect community rights, women's rights, wildlife conservation, the environment, human wildlife conflict and climate change.

## Method of Data Gathering


Information was collected virtually, through telephones and social media platforms created before the outbreak of COVID-19 to ensure constant communication between the organisation and the community members. Information was corroborated by community monitors working with CNRG across the seven districts – namely Marange, Mutoko, Hwange, Chivi, Bikita, Arda Transu and Lupane.

## The situation on the ground

### 1. Hwange

- Coal mining companies are operational in Hwange. This is because their operations relate to the generation of electricity, in terms of Section 2(c) and 4(1) of SI 83/2020 Public Health (COVID-19) Prevention Containment and Treatment – National Lockdown order.
- Some coal mining companies have housed employees within the premises so that they can continue working until the lockdown is over.
- Community members in Hwange are aware of the Coronavirus pandemic and the precautionary measures to be taken to minimise the spread. They are receiving regular updates through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp; national broadcaster, ZBC and a local community radio station, Hwange Community Radio which regularly broadcasts voice notes to the Hwange residents via Whatsapp groups.
- People have heeded the call to stay at home although there are isolated cases of vendors who are trying to sell their remaining perishable stocks. This is mainly because most of them are breadwinners and depend on street vending to fend for their families.
- Most shops have remained closed in Hwange, save for OK supermarket which remains functional. Beer halls have also remained functional, closing at 6p.m.
- Public transport (ZUPCO) and the Hwange Colliery Company Limited (HCCL) staff bus are still operating whilst mini buses are not plying their usual routes.
- Whilst the police and the military have been designated as enforcing officers during the lockdown, there is little presence of state security agencies in the communities to enforce the COVID-19 shutdown. People have voluntarily obliged.

### 2. Lupane

- There are no companies that are logging timber at the moment in Lupane and illegal timber logging activities have stopped since the lockdown. This is because police ha: [Leave a message](#) 

compliance.

- The community is fully aware of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown. Information was shared through community WhatsApp groups and also radio stations like Radio Zimbabwe and the Voice of America.
- There has not been a change in movement patterns as people are still walking around to sustain their livelihoods. People are still going about buying groceries from the shops and fetching water from community boreholes.
- Grocery shops are open in Lupane and shop owners are not sanitizing customers as they enter into the shops.
- The community boreholes are high risk areas because they attract many people but are not being sanitised. However, there are some conscious community members who are using soap and a clean cloth to wipe the pump handle but some community members cannot even afford soap.
- There is no public transport in Lupane, except for the government owned ZUPCO which is servicing long distances. The buses ply Bulawayo and rural Matabeleland routes.
- The challenge of human wildlife conflict continues and villagers are forced to go and guard the fields against elephants. This poses a risk to locals because they have to go in groups due to the distance between the villages and the fields. However, they are trying to maintain social distance as advised by health officials.

### 3. Chivi –Sese

- Murowa Diamonds which has been prospecting for Kimberlitic diamonds has stopped operations in line with the national lockdown order.
- There is limited awareness among community members because the government and health officials did not undertake community level campaigns. There is limited communication network in Chivi and as such, social media has not been much helpful.
- There have been no suspected or confirmed Coronavirus cases.
- State security agents are visible on the ground to monitor compliance.

### 4. Marange

- Prior to the lockdown, soldiers beat up informal traders at Bambazonke Business Centre in Marange. The soldiers accused vendors of supplying artisanal miners with food.
- The Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) and Anjin are still operating during the government sanctioned 21-day lockdown. However, the two companies are reported to have sent part of their workforce home whilst the skeleton staff is staying at the company premises in Marange.
- Artisanal diamond miners “Gwejas” are still sneaking into the diamond fields in search of the gemstone. At Chigome and Makatano villages, the artisanal miners are mining without protective clothes or sanitizers to combat the spreading of the COVID-19.
- The Marange Community is aware of the COVID-19 scare. They have received updates through social media platforms and state media such as National FM, Radio Zimbabwe and Diamond FM.
- The shops are closed and locals are having difficulties accessing basic commodities. The lockdown has heightened food insecurity among the poverty stricken community members.
- There is an unconfirmed report of a person at ZCDC who presented with flue-like symptoms related to coronavirus. The person was advised by company authorities to self-isolate. CNRG will make further

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investigations to verify the report.

## 5. Arda Transau

- It's business as usual at Arda Transau as people continue with their day to day lives. Movement has not been reduced because of food and water challenges.
- A section of the community is fetching water from the polluted Odzi river after their communal tap was closed due to non-payment of an electricity bill. Water is pumped by electricity to communal taps in this community.
- CNRG contacted Manicaland Provincial Administrator, Mr Edgar Seenza on his mobile phone to get clarity on the matter. However, the P. A. professed ignorance about unavailability of water in Arda Transau but said he will look into the matter. He urged communities to freely approach his office if they had issues.
- Law enforcement agents have not been seen in the area although President Mnangagwa decreed that they will be moving around to check on compliance.
- The nurses at Arda Transau Clinic are operating without protective clothing and this poses a risk to the community since they all depend on one clinic for primary health care.
- There have not been any awareness campaigns, whether by government officials or civil society organisations in Arda Transau area.

## 6. Bikita

- Community members living closer to Bikita Minerals have limited information about the Coronavirus and preventive measures to be taken. There is information deficit among villagers and the company has not intervened to raise the awareness of the pandemic to the community.
- There is limited internet access in this area and internet data is expensive so social media communication is not very effective.
- Due to the poor economic situation, locals are failing to stay indoors as they have to search for food and means of survival thereby defying the lockdown order and risking contracting COVID-19.

## 7. Mutoko

- In Mutoko, there is very limited movement by members of the public. People have heeded the call to stay at home.
- State security agents, members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Zimbabwe National Army are moving around the granite mining community monitoring the situation.
- All shops at Mutoko Centre are closed except PicknPay supermarket but public transport is not available.
- Beer halls and churches are all closed.
- Health officials have been moving around the district raising the awareness of the community.



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