



EXTRACTIVISM DESTROYING THE ENVIRONMENT

By Simiso Mlevu Posted June 5, 2020 In Press Releases

Centre for Natural Resource Governance joins the rest of the world in commemorating the World Environment Day which was set aside to raise awareness on the importance of protecting the environment. The day is commemorated on the 5th of June every year and the theme for this year is Time for nature, which Zimbabwe has customised to Time for Nature – Act Now.

We are commemorating the day at a time the Government of Zimbabwe is leaving no stone unturned in luring extractive industries through the Zimbabwe is Open for Business dictum, which however, has proved it serves the political elite and private sector's appetite to accumulate profit at the expense of nature.

Extractivism which is currently being intensified in Zimbabwe is characterised by serious environmental challenges which range from deforestation and degradation; water pollution caused by acid drainages from the mines and poor waste management; new investments in dirty energy, high carbon emissions and climate change.

The challenge in protecting the environment in Zimbabwe lies in the Government of Zimbabwe's expansive appetite for 'destructive developmental' projects and the inefficiency of the Environmental Management Agency which has ignored unabated environmental destruction by extractive companies as well as artisanal and small scale miners.

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Lives have been lost in Zimbabwe due to the negligence of mining companies which have closed without rehabilitating the environment, thereby tempting vulnerable sections of the society to go underground in search for gold in the disused mines.

We have examples that show the destructive character of extractive companies. In Penhalonga, the Development Trust of Zimbabwe and OzGeo ravaged Mutare River while undertaking riverbed mining. Mining activities by DTZ-OZGEO restricted the flow of Mutare River at a number of points. They altered the course of Mutare River to extract gold and extensively damaged the ecosystem. The company also failed to rehabilitate the environment despite the fact that Section 20 (1), of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and Ecosystems Protection Regulations dictates that “no person shall . . . destroy any natural vegetation on, or dig up, break up, remove or alter in any way the surface or soil of . . . land within 30 meters of the naturally defined banks of a public stream or bed, banks or course of any river or stream.”

The country continues to intensify investment in coal mining despite increasing evidence that fossil fuels are exacerbating climate change which is causing incessant droughts, fires, floods and cyclones in the world leaving tens of thousands dead annually. Expansion of coal mining activities and coal power plants is also antagonistic to the country’s commitment to limit the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) to below 33%. Coal mining activities have heavily interfered with bio-diversity in and around Deka River in Hwange, leading to deterioration of plants and aquatic life.

The impact of Extractivism on the environment is impoverishing millions of Zimbabweans who depend on a clean environment for livelihood and will lead to a grave ecological disaster.

CNRG calls on:

- The Environmental Management Agency to execute its statutory mandate of “ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environment, the prevention of pollution and environmental degradation, the preparation of Environmental Plans for the management and protection of the environment,” as spelt in the Environmental Management Act (Chapter 20:27).

- The mining companies to respect and observe the environmental laws of the country including putting an end to dumping harmful chemical wastes in river sources and clearing off coal dumping sites in order to create a safe environment for locals.

- The GoZ to fully implement its Climate Change Policy and invest in clean renewable energy.

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· The GoZ to reconsider it's over dependence on mining which has dismally failed to improve the economy. Instead, the government must invest in other environmentally friendly economic activities such as agriculture, ICT, green jobs etc.



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