

The Whistle-Blower

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader

Welcome back and I hope you had a good festive season as we look forward to 2020. This is our 1st edition in 2020 and I hope you will enjoy it.

Whilst 2019 was characterised by a number of success in our fight against corruption especially in the mining sector, it is my hope that this year, working together, we will be able to achieve even more.

In this edition we look at the chaotic wave caused by what has come to be known as 'Amashurugwi', a group of machete gangsters originating from Midlands who have been a menace to the miners and communities in Matabeleland.

What is worrying is that this group has been in existence for a long time yet no serious action has been taken until the last few weeks. One wonders then whose interests is this group representing?

Generally our cause-the fight against corruption-has been largely affected by lack of political will to address it.

It is our hope as CYDT that working together, we will continue to expose these evil actions and demand justice all the time. We need to exercise our rights as provided for in our constitution to protect our natural results and demand that we be the primary beneficiaries from them.

I hope you will enjoy this January edition, share it with others, take a moment to sit down with your neighbour and discuss how best we can address the issue of corruption in our communities.

Our Future is now, lets stand up, work together and defeat corruption.

To *ontanga*, lets get rolling.

Wishing you a fruitful 2020!



Cydt MatSouth



@CydtMat

AmaShurugwi Terrorise miners

An unpopular gang known as “*maShurugwi*” targeting gold mines and business people continues to terrorise the mining industry.

Artisan miners are not only faced with corruption in the mining sector, but their lives are in danger as a result of these deadly clashes with *amaShurugwi*. The brutal gang roams around mining areas armed with machetes and AK47 guns terrorising the miners and wreaking havoc in most communities with mining activities around the country.

According to statistics, machete gangs have killed over 300 people in the gold wars. These gangs started to be known as *amaShurugwi* because of their harassment back in the 2008 diamond rush in Manicaland. They have escalated to the gold rush areas even in Matabeleland South.

Reports of people being butchered, robbed of money, cell phones, gold and other valuables have emerged in places where *amaShurugwi* have attacked.

One of the reports state that about five homesteads in Fort Rixon in Insiza district were attacked and robbed off their gold and valuables. Previously in December the same group is reported to have attacked and robbed four shops at Riverside Business Centre.

The machete attacks have caused unrest amongst the minors as they fear for their lives and this has affected production in mines. A worker from Collen Bawn mine in Gwanda, who chose to remain anonymous for fear of being victimized, stated that “these attacks have a big impact due to injuries and fatalities and as such some



workers are even scared to come to work”.

At one of the mines owned by Mthandazo Women In Mining in Callen Bawn the machete gang killed three young innocent boys in cold blood. “Two pickup trucks full of masked machete boys pounced at the mine and forcefully opened the gates of the mine with the machetes.

The three innocent brothers were butchered while asleep after a hard day’s work underground in a shaft” narrated the miner who managed to escape the ordeal. There is serious need for the rule of law to take its course as the gang is violating people’s right to freedom of movement, and freedom to conduct their mining operations without fear.

Claims of arrests have been made by the police but serious intervention is needed from the Ministry of Home

Affairs as some of the gang members still enjoy impunity. Now because of the deteriorating economic condition in the country more thugs now masquerade as the *amashurugwi*,

A lot of questions remain in the minds of citizens as they wonder;

1. when is this going to end and who is going to stop it?
2. Is the government aware of the urgency of this matter and what is it doing to address the crisis?
3. Since ASM is contributing more on the fiscus, is this not affecting gold production in the mining sector?

It is then imperative for the government act and stop the wanton violence and killings by machete wielding gangs in ASM areas.

Open Mine Shafts a Danger to The Community



A whistle Blowers team has discovered a cow stuck in an open 20 metres deep mine shaft in Stella city A during a survey on artisanal miners in Maphisa.

Numerous uncovered shafts are a danger to livestock and the local communities living in the mining area. Unregulated mining in the area is believed the cause of such environmental hazards.

Unsafe artisanal mining is on the rise in Zimbabwe and poses a major threat on the well being of livestock and miners themselves. Incidents of livestock and wildlife falling into open mine shafts are recorded on daily basis across the country due to lack of adherence of protection and security measures by the miners.

A local farmer living in Maphisa bemoaned that artisanal mining around the area has resulted in him losing more of his livestock everyday due to these uncovered shafts. "We are losing more of our cattle to these open shafts and we end up selling our injured cows at half their worth.

Some we only discover them when they are already dead and it is really devastating".

Animals fall unexpectedly in mine shafts; die from lack of oxygen or severe injuries. In as much as artisan mining creates dangerous open mine shafts for livestock it is their only source of income at a time when the country is characterised by high unemployment rate.

However, according to the environmental impact assessment processes open mine shafts should be covered or fenced as form of protection to avoid animal and human tragedies.

While large commercial mines are regulated and have strategies to protect the local environment, unregulated small-scale miners often operate outside environmental and ecological law requirements, thus there is need for the government to intervene and look into the formalisation of these artisanal miners to eradicate this crisis.

The Zimbabwean mining industry is a difficult field to penetrate as it is characterised by excessive regulations and steep fees which has resulted in small scale miners and artisanal miners failing to register for mining rights.

Community Youth Development Trust (CY-DT) took time to interact with these small scale miners in Maphisa. The small scale miners lamented about the challenges they face due to lack of registration. One of the miners who chose to remain anonymous bemoan the government's failure to address the plight of small scale miners, especially that of formalisation.

"The authorities keep promising that they will address the formalization process of artisanal and small scale miners but to no avail. It is difficult to register on our own because the processes are long, bureaucratic and frustrating. This is hindering our efforts to formalize our activities," he said.

He further challenged the mother ministry to stick to their promises of visiting their working places to have a dialogue with the miners to fully understand their grievances. Another unregistered small scale miner said the government should also intervene in the process of sharing gold profits.

"The government should intervene so that everyone who works gets a fair share of the profits as mine owners' claim 50 percent of the profits and the workers have to share the remaining 50 percent among themselves which is very unfair," he said.

The result of this prejudice by mine owners to the miners on their mining profits is that, these miners are not registered and therefore have no power over these mining claims.

The miners argued that the little salaries they get from the mine owners are not enough to cater their daily needs. This forces them to end up stealing some of the gold to provide for their families. The miners also brought forward the issue of the tributary agreement in which they stated that the mine owners refuse with them so that they rob them of their gold proceeds hence this making it difficult for them to operate.



Zero bribe team members inspect a mine

The miners further state that they are afraid to sell the bulk of their gold to fidelity under the, new "ask no questions" policy which is meant to amass more gold

gold miners are now lobbying and demanding that at least 80% of their gold sales to the central bank be paid for in the more stable United States dollars to ena-

Miners Bemoan Slow, Frustrating Registration Process

output from the unregistered artisanal and small scale miners, because they feel is a scam for exposing their claims that produce the gold so that they get taken away.

They also attest that the "ask no questions" policy further expose them to corrupt practises by law enforcement who further demand bribes as their mining operations are illegal.

For those who are registered, the small and medium- scale

ble them to sustain their operations. "If such arrangements are made they will be improvement in our operations hence it will reduce the prospects of miners to take their gold to the market were they would get 100% forex retention," said the miner.

Recently the, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe lowered the forex retention threshold for small-scale miners from 70% to 55%.

Safety and Health a Must For Artisanal and Small Scale Miners

The economic meltdown that continue to deplete the livelihoods of many Zimbabweans has forced many young men and women across the country to scavenge for valuable minerals to earn a living. Artisanal and small scale mining has become a source of refuge for many especially the youth who seek to rescue themselves from the grip of poverty.

However, safety, health and environmental issues have become a cause for concern in the small scale mining industry, as small scale miners have become victims of working under unconducive conditions which are not only a threat to their health but also a life threatening risk.

Reports of shafts collapsing and killing people have increased in the small scale mining sector. Statistics have shown that more than 100 people have died in small scale and artisanal mining industry as at December 2019. The surviving artisanal mining population have been affected by mining related illnesses due to the unconducive working environment and lack of protective clothing. Small scale miners perform their mining activities in unpopular dangerous shafts with no protective wear.

During a Zero Bribe outreach exercise the team witnessed a miner going under a shaft with no helmet or safety shoes. When interviewed by the team the miner stated that he had no choice than to venture into this dangerous industry

“We have no choice but to get in the shafts without any protective mining wear. We have to take the risk because our families depend on us and the recent school fees hikes and ever rising cost of living leave us with no choice”.

At Antelope East Extension Mine in Maphisa, a miner named Jabulani Moyo passed away after falling into a



30metre deep shaft when a rope he was using to go down the shaft broke.

According to protocol, mineworkers should wear protective clothing such as helmets, safety shoes and protective padding. It is critical to note that most artisanal and small scale mining activities are conducted using rudimentary tools and methods.

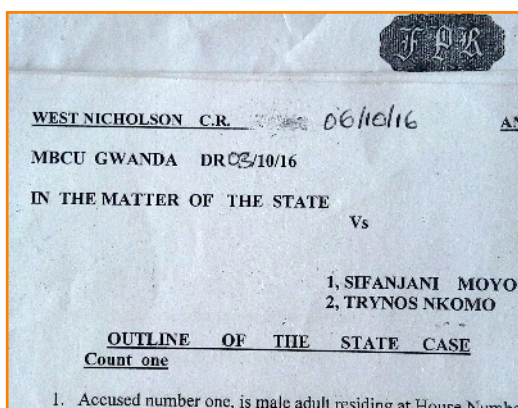
With the realisation that artisanal and small scale miners contribute a large percentage in gold output, it is imperative that the government invest in the safety of the miners.

This can be by equipping them with skills and knowledge in safety, health and environmental education, while also assisting them with adequate machinery and equipment to enhance their operations.

Political Will and Separation of Powers Key to Addressing Corruption



President Munangagwa



CORRUPTION: Trynos Nkomo and Sifanjani Bhebhe were co-accused of illegal mining in Gwanda by the State. However, Nkomo a Zanu PF member was allowed to take gold and gold ore they had produced together with Bhebhe by the Bulawayo High Court.



Sifanjani Bhebhe

One of the major promises by the so called 'new dispensation' was that it will deal with corruption as a matter of urgency. Hopes and expectations were high that after so many years of poor governance, characterised by shameless looting and greediness by those in power maybe, just maybe they will attempt to put brakes to corruption.

It turns out that the talk was just but talk to win votes and consolidate power. Lack of political will to deal with corruption is one of the bigger reasons if not the major reason why Zimbabwe is in such a sorry state especially economically where even professors are finding it difficult to find solutions.

Current media reports that government is setting up special anti-corruption courts is no surprise. It has been a usual norm by the power bearers to pretend to be busy and this is one such stance.

Surely, if the current justice system was good enough, many cases involving ministers, politicians and would have been dealt with long back and clear message sent out that indeed the new dispensation was 'new'.

The current economic situation is a breeding ground for corruption and the belief that a 'well remunerated judiciary will be difficult to compromise' is a fallacy. Addressing corruption requires political will and separation of powers for the judiciary to execute its duties independently. It goes beyond incentives especially in a nose diving economy like ours.

The anti-corruption training for various government stakeholders where members of Ugandan Anti-Corruption divi-

sion is a good move considering possible exchange of knowledge and ideas on how to curb corruption.

It is also ironic in some way in that Uganda's corruption ranking is very high. This raises questions as to why not learn from better performing countries such as our neighbour Botswana or even Kenya or Rwanda? Uganda is also regarded as a failed democracy which is a worrying factor for any government serious about dealing with corruption.

However, one can argue that the move to invite the Ugandans is more political and probably an opportunity to understand how to deal with political figures. The new dispensation has been accused of abusing the justice system to settle political scores.

Corruption related cases have been characterised by 'catch and release' kind of actions. The mining sector has been worse as the so called 'AmaShurigwi' have been terrorising people willy-nilly until recently. All this raises questions as to why would these mineral gangsters exercise such brutality but continue to go scot free?

The case between Sifanjani Bhebhe and Trynos Nkomo we once covered in our documentary is a reflection of how messed up our justice system is. Despite being found guilty of illegal mining, awarding Nkomo the gold and gold ore by the Bulawayo High Court is evidence that corruption in the mining sector is deeper than what meets the eye.

All this lawlessness in the mining sector is a reflection that political will and basic principles of good governance are still a long way to go. In all this chaos, someone somewhere is benefiting. Indeed where there is chaos, the rich benefit.