

The Socio-Economic Impact of Chiadzwa Informal Diamond Mining on the Lives of The People of Chiadzwa and Its Hinterland

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Abstract

Since the discovery of the vast fields of diamonds at Chiadzwa in Marange District, Manicaland province, life has not been the same for the people of the area and the surrounding districts, especially Marange, Mutare and Buhera. Diamond mining, both formal and informal, has impacted on their way of living, from their agriculture, their health, their values, the upbringing of their children, especially of school going age, their moral probity, including their language. Activities around the mine, the population traffic into a small place previously unknown to many even within the country, not to mention those from different countries have, in one way or the other, altered the way the people of Chiadzwa live. A people's life had been transformed and history had to record the transformation. The research set out to document the changes noticeable in the way of life of the people of Chiadzwa and its hinterland. In tracing and recording the socio-economic activities around Chiadzwa, the study used interviews, observations, focus group discussions and questionnaires. Targeted sampling was used for all administrators and random sampling was used for the miners, policemen, vendors, buyers and business people. The findings were that the lives of the people of Chiadzwa were to a large extent improved in the informal phase of mining. It was, however, difficult to establish the quantity of diamonds extracted during the phase in question.

Key words: Socio-economic, Chiadzwa, Diamond mining, Transformation, Informal

Introduction

A mineral rush began in September 2006 to the Marange diamond fields in the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe and accelerated following the government take-over in December of the same year. By mid-December 2006, around 10 000 illegal artisanal miners were working very small plots at Marange and an immediate water, sanitation and housing crisis developed. So dire was the crisis that the government started policing the roads that led to Marange, demanding to check National Identity cards for all travelling towards the diamond fields. All who travelled from the Mutare direction ought to have card IDs that started with number 75 as an indicator that they were local and not proceeding to the mine. In the same

token all using the Buhera route had to be 07 or else they were not allowed to proceed on their journey. The miners initially sold their diamonds to the government, but a black market rapidly developed, offering better prices. By late 2008, mining was being carried out by soldiers, using local villagers as forced labour. The soldiers occasionally paid the villagers with diamonds and surrendered much of their findings to senior officers. The government then launched a crackdown against illegal miners and smugglers. In November 2008, the Air Force was sent, after some police officers refused orders to shoot illegal miners on sight. Up to 150 of the estimated 30 000 illegal miners were shot from helicopter gunships. Estimates of the death toll by mid-December 2008 ranged from 83 to 140 as reported by the Mutare City Council based on a request for burial grounds. The military operation, known as 'No Return' also involved search travellers into and out of Mutare west area, with people found in possession of foreign currency or diamonds being detained and being forced to fill up holes on the diamond fields.

On 28 January 2009, the government announced plans to resettle some 4700 villagers from Chiadzwa to the 12000 hectare Transan Farm on the Odzi River. Although Manicaland Province Governor, Christopher Mushohwe, said the move had the full support of the traditional leaders, Chiadzwa villagers protested the resettlement.

The World Diamond Council called out for a clampdown on the smuggling of diamonds from Chiadzwa. For a while there was debate over the gems with some calling them blood diamonds, with the European Union planning a visit to Chiadzwa amid allegations of human rights abuse. On November 5, 2009, however, the Kimberly Process conducted its annual meeting in Namibia and decided against the suspension of Zimbabwe. Instead it recommended and then implemented with the compliance of the Zimbabwe government a twelve months work plan to monitor diamonds mined from the Marange field. The plan is aimed at preventing exports, curbing illegal digging, stopping smuggling, better securing the area, improving the accounting and auditing of Marange diamonds and supervising exports from the mine. Towards the end of 2009, there were reports that the diamonds were being smuggled through Mozambique.

The Herald, 4 July 2011, carries a pronouncement of the release of Marange diamonds worth US\$160 million mined in 2010 auctioned in November after the Jerusalem meeting and sold to Indian buyers but confiscated in the United Arab Emirates since then, awaiting the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme's decision to sell them. According to the World Federation of Diamond Resources, *The Sunday Mail*, May 29-June 4, Zimbabwe should be allowed to sell its alluvial diamonds to avert an imminent shortage of the gems on the international market. In the previous year, Zimbabwe sold diamond worth more than US\$200 million. Presently, Mbada

Diamonds, Anjin and Marange Resources – the three companies operating at the Chiadzwa diamond fields are only extracting and stockpiling the stone as stated by New Ziana. It is against this background that this research sets out to find out the socio-economic impact of the informal diamond mining at Chiadzwa.

Research on Chiadzwa is still in its nascence, not much has been done in terms of thorough going research. What has been done are journalistic reports in local news papers. Reports from different sources concur that the Chiadzwa diamond fields are among the largest in the world and the diamonds themselves are 18 percent gem, among the most sought after. It is these diamonds in the initial mining phase that impacted on the lives of the community of Chiadzwa in sundry ways. From the information that can be accessed, the Chiadzwa diamond fields lie in an area after Gonouya and are close to Mutsago area in Marange District. Popularised especially around 2008 when the country was going through a serious economic crisis, the Chiadzwa story is said to have undergone three phases: one where diamonds, in form of small stones of usually greenish to black colours were being collected by villagers and being stored in their homes without giving them much monetary value; second, was a period of awareness where people flocked to the place in their thousands to mine, smuggle, sell and all sorts; third, is the situation today, a period of total restriction and security, where particular mining companies, such as Mbada Diamonds, hold the rights to mine and individuals are chased away by dogs. In short, one interviewee, Mr Mangoma, called the phases, the picking, the digging and the companies. The three phases as it were had great socio-economic impact on the people of Chiadzwa and those in the neighbourhood. The inhabitants of Marange District have a story to tell about a phase that has made indelible marks in their lives and memories.

The main objective of this research is therefore is to document life at Chiadzwa. To produce a chronology of socio-economic-historico events in Chiadzwa so as to bring to the fore the changes in life styles the people of Chiadzwa have experienced as a result of the diamond fields. To create an article that would be a source of the history of Chiadzwa for future generations.

Methodology

The research made use of the omnibus research design which combined the quantitative and the qualitative research designs. The use of both methods was to encourage countering the weaknesses of either method. The quantitative design allowed for collection of statistics on miners involved at Chiadzwa at particular times, households that were involved and all numerical details provided in the findings. The qualitative research design was required in the documenting of

comments, descriptions and assessments of the impact by the people that were interviewed. The research largely drew information through interviews with people who live in the Chiadzwa area, Marange District at large, Buhera Central and South, Mutare District as well as people who participated in the diamond mining at different levels, from the miners, security personnel, vendors, buyers of the product and administrators. The first visit required combined effort by 3 researchers to lay the foundation of the research through identification of interviewees for the various areas the study covered and the setting up of dates and the logistics for interviews. Convenience sampling was used to select the following list of respondents; 5 x heads of wards, 5 x heads of VIDCO, 5 x councillors, 5 x headsmen, 1 x Member of Parliament, 25 male and 25 female miners from the area under study. The study also collected data from villagers who were not miners. The participants were; 10 males, 10 females and 25 secondary school pupils. The pupils were randomly selected from 20 secondary schools. The schools were also randomly selected from a total of 250 schools in the chosen districts. The research made use of guided interview schedules in order for the interviews to address targeted issues and achieve the objectives of the research. The interviews were guided, asking initially for personal details, life in syndicates, personal benefits from the mining, observed achievements by others, the socio-economic impact and comments about Chiadzwa. This instrument gave the interview a high degree of focus and interviews had not much chance to stray. The disadvantage, however, was that some interviewees who had more to contribute found it difficult to prolong talk on something they were not asked about. Questionnaires were also used to spread the network of responses. Since not everybody participated in the face to face interviews, questionnaires had the advantage that more respondents were covered in a short space of time. The instrument was chosen to cover the many respondents that needed to be covered. The questionnaires had six sections, covering personal details, life in syndicates, the benefits, social challenges, what was seen as the way forward and comments. Nonetheless, questionnaires also have weaknesses of leading the interviewee and limiting them to what is asked. The challenges embedded in these instruments were countered by interviews that were carried out as follow up to the responses in the questionnaires. Comprehensive unstructured interviews were carried out in the third visit as a way of clarifying all areas that were not clear in earlier interviews.

Results and Discussion

This research discovered, through, interviews and questionnaires, that the people who occupied the area called Chiadzwa at the discovery of the diamond were largely the ones who had been displaced earlier from Osborne Dam. The discovery of diamonds came to displace them for the second time. The origins of Chiadzwa

as a mine are shrouded in mystery with some saying a school child dreamt of a place full of diamonds and was led by some spirit of the area to a particular area meant specifically for the locals to benefit. According to an on-line source, diamonds in Chiadzwa are associated with myths and beliefs which confirm the logic of schematic notions of belonging and entitlement. Elderly members of the communities of Marange recalled that after the discovery of the diamonds there were a series of rituals including beer brewing and ancestral worship that took place under the guidance of local spirit mediums. The myths, beliefs and rituals are used to disdain government appropriation of the fields, including its fencing off of these fields with razor sharp wire and the deployment of violent security forces. Such fencing which started in October 2006 was viewed by spirit mediums, traditional healers and the ordinary citizenry as offending the land spirits, who are believed to have provided this treasure. This idea to exclude the ordinary people by government became the origin of rife struggles between the government and informal miners making Chiadzwa a social space muddled by tension and struggles. Others say that one white man used to carry soils from around that area and was probably getting the diamond before the locals got aware. In this version, the white man would collect soil, go to South Africa with his findings and come back to slaughter some cattle for the local who would have helped in the digging. Nonetheless, beyond the mystery of its origins, Chiadzwa is a story of economic gains that came with grievous disruptions to life, culturally, health wise and socially. One interviewee, Mr Musundire, agreed that people were enriched by Chiadzwa until dogs, shamboks, live bullets and companies came to displace them and portions of Chiadzwa began to be fenced off.

Getting rich out of Chiadzwa

All the interviewees the researchers talked to stress the fact that Chiadzwa at one point was very enriching to syndicates and individuals. People of all ages went to Chiadzwa, digging for diamonds at night in syndicates, which were groups of people who came together to put their effort to improve their chances of finding and surviving the mine. If a finding was made, the syndicate would have it weighed and sold right away and the proceeds were divided equally among the members of the syndicate. If the finding was big, the members would take a break and leave for their home to share the spoils with family, having bought some goodies from those who sold different wares around the mine or from nearby shopping centres which were sprouting because of the quick cash flow coming from Chiadzwa's direction. They would come back after the break, from resting their backs, seeing family typical of migrant labourers really, to proceed with mining and the cycle continued in that fashion while it lasted.

The money that came from Chiadzwa was liquid and quick. Those who got it wasted no time using it to improve their lot. This kind of behaviour, however, was to backfire in many ways, with those who witnessed the kind of spending calling it directionless spending. Anybody who was seen that time displaying a lot of buying power would be labelled as coming from Chiadzwa where spending money did not have to be planned. Sometimes the items or the use of money was not prioritised, one would just buy because money was available said Mr Mangoma. Through observation, the most bought items were beer, clothing, satellite dishes, cell phones, solar panels, cattle and goodies from South Africa, provided not so far from the mine buy business people who knew how to exploit a God-given opportunity. These items would be bought and left at home where they were sometimes abused by those left in their custody.

According to Mrs Zariro of Masasa Township, townships thrived, business boomed and shops were stocked for *gwejas* (illegal miners) who did not know how to handle the newly found fortune. Major stopping areas for shopping were Zvipiripiri, Masasa, Murambinda to the north and Mutsago, Marange, Odzi, and Mutare to the east. Business people of the Apostolic religion, who know how to follow business where it is collected sums of money providing different kinds of services from; selling food items, clothing, building material, transporting people and goods, fixing cars and anything broken really. Omega Mandemwa, with a thriving shop at Masasa, explained how, in the hey days, it was difficult to maintain a stocked shop:

One would travel to Murambinda or South Africa for that matter to bring in stock, by the time you come back the shop is near empty people fighting to get to the goods first. It was hectic, we ended up hiring labour to keep bringing in goods from Mutare or Murambinda so that we could keep in business. We enjoyed the money but sometimes it meant no rest or sleep. We even increased prices of goods when we were running in short supply. It is only now that we look back and see that we were exploiting people. Now we have no business at all. We had expanded our shops and presently we feel like renovating them again to make them small.

Outside the down side of business people cheating customers, the diamond mining disrupted the education of most children in the hinterland of Chiadzwa. Most schools were running low on students and teachers alike. One Mr Mahanzu from Matsvai Secondary School in Buhera said that most schools closed for a while. School pupils absented themselves, absconded and teachers dissented work. All ages went to try their luck at Chiadzwa and schools in extreme cases remained only with school heads. Even after restrictions were imposed on informal mining

and illegal miners were sent back to their home, schools are struggling to recover their usual enrolments. Those children who had tested the sweetness of quick cash face difficulties to fit back into the school environment, as a result the hinterland of Chiadzwa is littered with drop outs and people whose daily routine is to work up and man the townships and growth points. The down side of the money coming from Chiadzwa has been that the youth of school going age believe that money can still be made without them necessarily going through school and this has reduced the value of going to school in most children. Some even bought some ramshackle vans and trucks, with their findings, that they use to pirate plying rural routes without drivers' licences and permits to do so. Asking one school drop out at Murambinda Growth point why he did not consider going back to school after Chiadzwa he had this to say:

Going back to school is not an option for me again. I left school at the time I was repeating form three. If I go back to school how long will it take me to be employable and what guarantee do I have that I will pass. At least with the money I got from ngoda 'diamonds' I have gotten into the business of ferring people from Murambinda here to Viriri Business Center. The van needs servicing but that is not possible now, I transport people and when there is a break down the passengers help me to fix the van and we proceed like that. Road blocks are rare on this route and I survive even without a licence. Going to school is not important for me anymore.

Teachers have also had challenges going back into the school system given the low remuneration that characterise the education system (among all other government departments) after the Zimbabwean crisis. Many of them disserted to South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland in that order, with some of them getting into self-employment. Most of these teachers who left employment did not do so formally, they just left when it suited them and in many cases they remained on the pay roll for a while. The spirit of dissenting work also affected local labourers within the immediate surroundings of Chiadzwa. People, on their way to Chiadzwa on foot from all corners, would pretend to seek employment as cattle herders, garden boys, house help or baby carers when they got tired at any point in their journey and work until they get paid and leave unannounced. Responding to a question about such behaviour Mrs Mashingaidze a teacher at Romorehoto Primary School said:

We do not know who to trust now when looking for house help to remain with our babies as we go to work. We have fallen victims of Chiadzwa. The girls come on their way to the diamond fields and take us as resting points while

they gather information on the routes to take into Chiadzwa that would not give them trouble with the police, and they leave in no time. After their first salary we just begin to look for another house help, we now know that one day you would find your baby alone and the helper no where to be found. It is disturbing because we now go to work fearing the worst and sometimes as they leave they steal some provisions in the house for their survival in the hills as they stay to mine at night. The trouble is every month you are training a new helper and that is not good for small babies, we donot know how to raise our families the way we want. The helpers would not stay with us, they see more money in Chiadzwa compared to the 30 dollars that teachers barely afford to pay them per month.

Chiadzwa was a cash cow for the ordinary citizenry who had their power to dig and their luck while it lasted. Many livelihoods were transformed, initially for the better and later their story changed. Some females who could not stand the rigours of mining and carrying soil (chitaka) in sacks from the mine pits (mwena) to where the soil was sifted for the three types of stones 1) gigazi 2) ngoda 3) 6 colours (carats) shared in the spoils of men through prostituting themselves. Individuals could spend months on end away from their families and it was not difficult to find people forming relationships at the Chiadzwa fields or getting into one night stands for survival and as a way of maximising gains at Chiadzwa. Some men got employed as guards, vendors, shop keepers and also other took up piece jobs that became available now and again. An adolescent girl interviewed on the moral probity of people at Chiadzwa had nothing to hid saying:

Look at me, am I not too young and fragile to carry that chitaka for distances in the night running way from the police with that burden on my shoulder where do I get the money. I keep my ears on the ground for any news of and where money is concerned anything is possible. Yes, I have collected a lot from men this way and as long as it pays I see no reason I should stop giving men this service and I am not the only one. My parents will not know because they are not here but I have here some people from my community and some of my teachers.

The down side of Chiadzwa

Almost all participants in this research sounded some concern about how Chiadzwa benefited people and then its benefits disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. While some were still refining their strategies when in Chiadzwa, before they had even left their homes, Chiadzwa was closed for the informal miners leaving some regretting why they had not been decisive in time. Perhaps the biggest loss for historians such as the undertakers of this research is that of the lack of

documentation of the goings on at Chiadzwa, from the displacement of people, deaths in the belly of Chiadzwa and the activities around the entry points into Chiadzwa such as Matiasi, Romorehoto and others among all that happened because of Chiadzwa. That as it may, this research through interviews attempted to get a feel of how people viewed the different phases of Chiadzwa seen together. Mr Magada of Murwira Primary School says he does not have good memories of Chiadzwa because:

To begin with, I am a teacher and Chiadzwa disrupted the running of schools in this whole area with areas around Matiasi, Machiragwama, Chirozva, Betera, Mutemera, Matsvai, Gudo, Matereke, Mutepfe, Usavi, Masasa, Zvipiripiri, Muzokomba, Romorehoto, Makomwe, Mutsago, Nharira, Chirinda, Munyoro, 22, Matsetsa, Chapanduka, Dune, Save, Mupeza, Munhuruka, Munyarari Odzi, Sosten, Viriri, Chiurwi, Ndyarima, Maneta, Manhuru and Zvomwoyo among a number being the most affected. Dissertion was rife with most professionals no longer caring about formal employment and abandoning their jobs and pensions they had accumulated over years. The most annoying problem was that of noise pollution. Shop owners, in their bid to attract Chiadzwa money bought strong music machines and played loud local and popular artists throughout not even breaking for the night. Customers were entertained at anytime regardless of the proximity of such shops to a school set up. As if that was not enough, radios, satellite dishes and powerful stereo systems powered through solar panels were available in all homes and the razzmatazz in the atmosphere only spoke of competition to see who could play it the loudest. Pupils brought cell phones to school, also gotten through Chiadzwa money and schools were turned into show-off zones. Live bands became the normal way wasting away nights at business centres and we yearned the day it would all come to an end. The coming of the generator to light up area of recreation in the rural area was also a bitter-sweet development. Much as the generator gave the much needed break from darkness usually only broken by the approach of the full moon, generators are notorious for their eardrum damaging noise. The culture of drinking noisy places cum grocery shops as well as loud music coming from taxis (provided by Vapostori in the area) had crept in, in the most disturbing of ways.

Out side causing noise pollution, shop owners grew to be very greedy putting mark up prices on goods that affected the value of the US dollar. Today, shops in Mutare are the most expensive compared to other shops in towns further away from Chiadzwa. Shop owners also ended up stocking commodities not stipulated

in their licences. A shop licenced to sell clothes would now stock food stuff as well and even illegal beers and spirits from Mozambique in a bid to maximize profits or not to lose out to other business people who would have stocked goods that were on demand on a particular day. Some men died as a result of taking spirits just bought from such shops. According to Mrs Viriri of Sosten Township, culprit were spirits like Zedy and Laudzani from Mozambique, too much of it made one to sleep and die in their sleep. Men got too tired in the pits as well as from walking and by the end of the day their bodies demanded some strong dose of spirit to deaden body aches and in other cases the spirits were part of the fun at Chiadzwa, they put people in high moods.

Cash flow from Chiadzwa also increased the love of bribe, 'the tip' and 'my cut' at all levels. The start of informal mining at Chiadzwa came together with the introduction of the American dollar, a major transition in the lives of the Zimbabweans, coming from the Zim-dollar which banks could no longer provide to the all powerful and hard to come by US dollar. This was a time when everybody was trying to figure out how to get hold of this currency and Chiadzwa provided the opportunity. Security manning the mine asked for their cut once a syndicate under their care made a finding and sold. Police at road blocks on major roads leading into Chiadzwa took tips from those who wanted easy entry into Chiadzwa. Even shop owners again took tips for reserving a commodity in short supply for those who tendered more. Dollar power made it possible for shop owners to stock goods which were not commonly found in rural areas and in some cases such goods failed to sell in time and were keep on shelves for after their expiry dates for the unsuspecting customers. The dollar from Chiadzwa also caused impulsive buying since shops had been turned into one stop for all needs and services.

Many interviewees lamented the emptiness they feel with the disappearance of the informal mining at Chiadzwa. Outside losing opportunities to change their plight with Chiadzwa money, the shared feeling is that a kind of life they were now warming up to was just taken away from them too suddenly. For some interviewees, it was the well lit, lively, loud and abuzz with activity townships they now miss. Some townships which were only coming to life because of Chiadzwa have since been deserted again, they look ghostly and white elephants are seen all over. Other shopping complexes were still to be completed and were abandoned because they had targeted informal miners who have now been sent to their homes. Others felt that they were being to enjoy being in the rural areas where they had ended up as a result of 'Operation Drive Out Dirty' Murambatsvina. One youth said:

I was beginning to fall in love with the rural areas, a place I have always seen as for the aging and frail. We had a booming night life where we did not have to pay to be in the thick of things like our brothers in town would. Shop owners would do anything to keep us around their shops as a way of showing potential buyers that this was the place to buy from. Areas that had gained some prominence now experience some dullness that is palpable. It is like a part of our bodies has been removed. Now we all want to move back to the city and wait for a second Operation Murambatsvina to uproot us from there. We can not stay here, it is lonely and gloomy out here and when I want to travel to Murambinda, the state of the gravel road discourages me.

After some period of boom, madness and plenty in Chiadzwa, when the government wanted to stop informal mining, those who had bought property and were within accessible distance from Chiadzwa were followed up by the government and property was confiscated. The government embarked on 'Operation Wakazviwanasei' (Operation how did you get the money to buy your property) where the government was bent on taking away from those who had made a bumper harvest in Chiadzwa. This kind of move demoralised people after all the hard work. Some even lost property which had not been bought with Chiadzwa money just because they had nothing to prove or confirm their sources of income in the periods in question. Electric gadgets and cattle were the ones that fell victim to collection by government. Fights and deaths over this property was also not uncommon among syndicate members or community members, with people fighting mostly over cattle and cell phones.

Because of the stoppage of cash flow from Chiadzwa, property that was bought lacks servicing especially cars. Most cars that were bought using Chiadzwa money were in the best of conditions, they were third if not fourth hand cars which required a lot of servicing which is no longer possible in the absence of cash. Many of the cars are seen today being used as chicken runs or kennels for dogs lying at the edges of their owners' homesteads. The status that their owners had just acquired vanished and they are back to being pedestrians. The solar panels have since been brought down from roof tops where they had been tied, as a way of announcing the arrival of a new status to the neighbourhood, to be sold for one reason or the other. The same fate has befallen the satellite dishes which lost value after the 2010 soccer world cup. Not much remains in the households to show for the Chiadzwa phase. Even mothers who went to Chiadzwa and came back with kitchen utensils and clothing hardly know where they have put the last pieces of the cheap quality shoes they had bought for their children. This was a period when shop keepers sold just but anything regardless its quality and consideration of business ethics.

The goods had no guarantee and sellers were not tied by any business rule and there was no telling that when one buys they would see the face of those who sold a commodity again on the following day.

Outside making people fake and shameless, the Chiadzwa informal mining period also caused great population movement. To get to Chiadzwa people travelled big distances mostly on foot and the same people made numerous trips between home and the diamond fields. This movement had a lot of challenges ranging from making oneself vulnerable on the roads, on foreign land to encouraging contact between people from different backgrounds and mind you this was the cholera era in Zimbabwe. Some miners meet their deaths on the road enroute to Chiadzwa. The kind of transport used was not always safe and sometimes travelling was done by night making people vulnerable. For example one potential informal miner told a story of how he and a van load of others almost lost their lives crossing a river between Betera and Munhuruka in Buhera. After the 2011 heavy rains of February, the bridge that links the Betera side to Munhuruka on the route to Chiadzwa gave in and collapsed. However, as one travels from the Betera side it is easy not to see that the bridge is broken in half, especially during the night. It is this way that the van the man in question was travelling by had a close shave, almost falling into the gaping river only stopping with one wheel already dangling in the air.

Other deaths were caused by friction and tensions caused by differences in cultures and backgrounds of the people who had to train to live together in a space to allow the mining to take place. The miners including those who were there for other reasons had their differences during socialisation and others took out knives at each other. Even those from the same syndicate could kill each other when they were not happy about something. Some people died in the pits, because of the volumes of people and who had no particular order when mining, others would dig directly below others and the pits had no support systems. Mr Musundire, talking about such sad occurrences remembered how some youth met their death:

The fact that there were too many people who had one night at a time to turn around their lives made diggers very vulnerable. One fateful day, three youth, from my Village, Viriri died in one of the pits after it collapsed on top of them. The three boys, one of them Rangarirai Viriri (the late Vindo Viriri's son), went inside a pit to dig out chitaka. They got tired of digging and decided to take a nap inside the pit and unfortunately for them, the roof of the pit was no longer firm because of a lot on digging on top and the roof came down on them. We accompanied their bodies back home and we did not know how to mourn them the three of them coming from the same village. Nonetheless, after the burials, the attraction to go back to the mine was still

very strong and we went back and were told stories by those that had remained at the mine that the day that followed the collapsed, there were a lot of diamonds picked just where the boys had died.

Informal mining in Chiadzwa was at its peak when Zimbabwe was experiencing a health crisis with cholera. The health department had broadcasted a list of precautions on how to minimise infection. Largely, people were supposed to avoid unnecessary travel outside their own areas, avoid huddling in small spaces with bad sanitary conditions, avoid hand shakes and to wash hands with soap regularly. Life in Chiadzwa would be the direct opposite of these health precautions, making the place a health hazard waiting to happen. Those who were in Chiadzwa at anytime gave accounts of how others would be washing their clothes and bathing upstream while some were collecting drinking water down stream. The haphazard kind of life led there made people very vulnerable given that people using the same streams and rivers had different kinds of skin diseases and even HIV Aids. The bringing together of people of different character, preferences and thoughts did not only make them vulnerable through the water they drank but also through a multiplicity of other means such as sexually transmitted diseases, intoxication of the minds through discussions of politics and current affairs debates during socialisation and a horde of other ways really. Despite the potential health hazards, informal miners felt the smell of the diamonds in Chiadzwa stronger than death that stared them in the face.

As people travelled from their homes to Chiadzwa, mostly on foot, they passed places they had never known before. As they passed, some would have had the chance to access the security of such places for future purposes, in case things did not work out in Chiadzwa, they would know where to get easy goats, appliances, groceries or whatever it was that they sought. The movement of higher densities of people broke the vigilance of most community making them lose track of who passed by and when.

In other words, areas which were previously not known got to be commonised and easy to approach by the goings and comings of people. Some collected things that did not belong to them even as they went to Chiadzwa. One elderly lady from Mukonavanhu village told of how she found her pot of home-made bread empty while she went to collect some water to make her tea, some hungry person going to Chiadzwa had helped themselves it was later verified. This kind of thieving got worse with the end of informal mining in Chiadzwa. In Viriri especially, there have been terrible and regular reports about burglary, people stealing to sustain the status of staying with cash they had leant during the days of plenty in Chiadzwa. One of the researchers, from Viriri, had her solar panel and generator stolen from her home (Chitobwe Gardens) by some youth who could no longer get occupied

in Chiadzwa nor in any kind of formal work, themselves being school drop outs. Police stations around Chiadzwa are on high alert because of this thieving going around partly because people were used to cash flows and buying what they wanted or when they did or because people find nothing to do around their home if they can not be in Chiadzwa or school anymore.

Chiadzwa came with a language of its own that introduced new words or gave new meaning to existing words, turning the population around Chiadzwa into linguists. This language got to be known among all the people with something to do with Chiadzwa and later spread to those who have never been to the mine. Words like *gweja*, referring to a male informal/ illegal miner, *gwejerine*, naming the female miner, *ngoda*, referring to a type of diamond found in Chiadzwa, *girazi*, also a type diamond, *6 colours*, meaning 6 carats another kind of finding, *syndicate*, referring to mining alliances, *chitaka*, soil from a mining pit, *mwena*, mining hole, and many more. According to an article in the *Sunday Mail* of August 21-27 2011 where Great Zimbabwe University linguist, Professor Herbert Chimhundu, commented on the new language emerging from taxi rank marshals, local languages always accommodated new words, mainly coined through slang. The adoption of new words in the standard dictionary depended on their continued use, which is their stability. In the near future, depending on their stability these words could find their way into the dictionary.

Conclusion

Africa is the centre and future ground of natural resources exploitation because it still remains largely untapped and wild. In Zimbabwe, for now, Chiadzwa is producing diamonds and the citizenry, with the understanding that resources in Zimbabwe must belong to them, have, for some period of time, taken it upon themselves to enjoy the rich fields.

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Headman Mabvuregudo interviewed at Nyamakute Primary School, Buhera 6 August 2011.

Mr N. Gonese, interviewed at Mupeza School, Buhera, 17 June 2011.

Mrs B. Gwama interviewed at Chirozva Business Centre, Buhera, 17 June 2011.

Mr S. Magada interviewed at Manhuru Business Centre, Buhera, 11 July 2011.

Mrs M. Mandemwa interviewed at Kandenga Business Centre, Buhera, 20 June 2011.

Mr M. Mangoma interviewed at Viriri Business Centre, Buhera, 17 June 2011.

Mr M. Musundire interviewed at Sosten Business Centre, Buhera, 11 July 2011.

Mrs J. Mutepfe interviewed at Muzokomba Business Centre, Buhera, 18 June 2011.

Mrs D. Romorehoto interviewed at Romorehoto entry point into Chiadzwa, Buhera, 10 July 2011.

Mr T. Simbanegavi interviewed at Mabvuregudo Secondary School, Buhera, 10 July 2011.

Mrs J. Viriri interviewed at Chiadzwa diamond fields, Marange, 18 June 2011.

Mrs Zariro interviewed at Masasa Business Centre, Buhera, 20 June 2011.

Police Officer interviewed at Murambinda Growth Point, Buhera, 9 July 2011.

Police Officer interviewed at Sanga Police Base, Buhera, 17 July 2011.

Students from Matsvai, Chirozva, Machiragwama, Muzokomba, Zipiripiri, Chikwariro, Marange Mission, Mutsago, Murwira, Betera interviewed at their schools, 11 July 2011.