


**RESEARCH ON THE STATE OF GENDERED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN ARTISANAL MINING
AREAS OF WARD 1 AND 2 INSIZA DISTRICT, MATABELELAND SOUTH**

Building Resilience Inclusiveness and Social Cohesion and Healing



RESEARCH REPORT

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Abbreviations

DDC	District Development Coordinator
EWf	Emthonjeni Women's Forum
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
PCs	Peace Committees
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

1.0 Executive Summary

This study carried out in 2022 sought to understand the nature of gendered violence and conflicts in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza District which are artisanal mining areas. The task was to explore the gendered nature of violence and conflicts prevailing in the community. While men, boys, girls and women all experience violence in varying degrees, it was found that women feel the effects of violence and conflict the most as they experience it as direct victims, and vicariously when their husbands and/or sons cause, or are inflicted with violence. This is because they bring their troubles home to the wife or mother who, more often than not, has to try to address the problems or live with the consequences of their actions.

Gender is often one of the key determinants of what social spaces and opportunities might be available or not available to society or family. Therefore, people's vulnerability is largely shaped by their gender although other factors may also contribute to it. Most societies are generally constructed in such a way that women and children have the least power and natural rights and are therefore regarded as weak and powerless. They are especially vulnerable to violence as they are often unable to defend themselves or outrun perpetrators of violence. Violence and conflict tend to be especially gendered in a mining context because mining is still largely viewed as a male domain. Lawlessness and violence in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza District, as in most parts of the country, are driven mostly by groups of armed young men—often outsiders, who appear to act with impunity.

The levels and types of violence and conflicts villagers have to deal with on a daily basis are wide and varied. The influx of outsiders, some of whom are wanted criminals elsewhere, has greatly altered the locals' traditional lifestyle. Locals who venture into artisanal mining—legally or illegally—have their mines and/or ore snatched by machete gangs once word of a rich vein gets around. The fear of falling victim to violence, thefts and muggings is a reality people have to navigate continually. After a day's work, both local and outsider artisanal miners converge at the shopping centres to drink beer (the main form of relaxation). Incidents of violence are prevalent in these spaces. There is something about money earned from artisanal mining and gold panning that seems to alter people's sense of normalcy. Research participants spoke of conflicts caused by the fact that once men realise high earnings from their ventures they tend to abandon their families and disappear for long periods of time, to spend their earnings with other women; leaving their families without food or money to buy it with. When they return later with no money, conflicts flare up in the family. Women are always suspicious when their spouses return empty handed, even if they might genuinely have failed to strike gold. This feeds into a continuous cycle of tension and conflicts at home.

A significant number of boys between the ages of 12 and 13 are said to have dropped out of school to pursue gold. The phenomenon grew during the COVID-19 period when schools were closed, once they had tested the money from gold many did not return to school and others continue to drop out influenced by the lifestyle of those who went before them. A significant amount of money in the hands of children has caused them to become arrogant and unruly. Somehow gold money seems to make them believe they are invincible and on par with the adults. They have taken to alcohol and drugs causing them to be further out of control. They

were said to be a threat to adults and prone to destroying property at will. Because some parents now depend on these children's support, they fear reprimanding them in case the children withdraw their support.

Young school girls are vulnerable to artisanal miners, both young and old, and both locals and outsiders. They are enticed with little gifts into early sex, often resulting in teenage pregnancies and disruption to their schooling. Some bunk school in order to be with their lovers during school time. Their parents, who are already struggling to look after them, now have to assume the responsibilities of looking after their grandchildren as well.

A qualitative approach was used for this research and involved nine FGDs, five for females and four for men. Participants were chosen purposively from the villages in the two wards and were a mixture of those involved in artisanal mining or panning, ordinary villagers, members of the peace committees, business owners, and others involved in other jobs besides mining. A total of 74 people, 44 women and 30 men, participated in the FGDs. Twenty KIIs were also conducted and these included village heads, ZRP, DDC officials, PC leaders, the two ward councillors, Ministry of Women's Affairs official and one female victim of a mine grab.

2.0 Introduction

In Africa, artisanal mining and illegal panning continue to attract more people due to the ever rising levels of poverty and unemployment (Kelly 2014; LSE 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has had drastic effects on poverty levels in Africa, with some 39 million people estimated to have been affected¹. In Zimbabwe alone, the World Bank estimates that half of the population (7, 9 million) reached extreme poverty². The mining sector is one of those economic sectors that have seen an exponential rise in Artisanal mining and illegal panning as many flock to this industry that remains largely unregulated, and where regulations exist, they are often difficult to enforce.

The International Crisis Group reports that in 2020 Zimbabwe had about 1. 5 million artisanal miners³, this number probably does not account for all illegal miners. The sheer numbers of prospectors, and the general lack of the rule of law in this sector has given rise to all sorts of violent activities. In particular, the prevalence of violent gangsters (popularly referred to as *Mashurugwi*, or as they call them in Insiza, *aMabhambadzi*), has caused untold havoc wherever gold—which is the mineral mostly extracted by artisanal miners—is found. The unruly gangs use force to grab other miner's processed gold, the ore or any claim which is suspected to have rich gold vein, they do not hesitate to maim or kill in order to access these (ICG 2020; Mkodzongi 2020; Smith 2020).

The sheer magnitude of the violence and chaos in this sector means that law enforcement agents are unable to cope with the situation and these gangs have an almost unfettered reign.

¹ <https://www.one.org/international/blog/coronavirus-impact-work-poverty-africa/>

² Zimbabwe economic update 2021.

³ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/294-all-glitters-not-gold-turmoil-zimbabwes-mining-sector>

This makes artisanal mining a dangerous job in Zimbabwe since anyone can be attacked whenever they are suspected of having struck gold. In 2003, when the number of artisanal miners was about 300 000, Hinton, Veiga and Beinhoff (2003) put the number of women involved in the informal mining at 50%. This means that there are a lot of women who are participating in this dangerous activity. In any violent situation, women, the elderly and children tend to be the most vulnerable. Therefore, it can be assumed that this also applies to artisanal mining (Chingono 2021; Makaza & Chimuzinga 2020). The influx of men, especially youth, in illicit gold panning has created various forms of conflict which put women at the receiving end. The escalated cases of gender-based violence, lack of control by women over their sexuality, increased cases of sex work and lack of information by women and traditional leaders concerning the effective management of GBV as well as conflict management, have exacerbated cases of GBV⁴.

3.0 Gender and violence

According to Myrtilinen, Naujoks and Schilling (2015: 182), “gender, the way in which we are women and boys, girls and men, trans or intersex persons, is often a key factor in determining social spaces and opportunities available or not available to us, therefore, setting the parameters of our vulnerability.” While gender is an important factor in determining vulnerability, it is by no means the only one, neither are men and women homogeneous category with the same needs and possibilities (*ibid*). This then requires that gender analysis should take into consideration that men and women are affected differently because of how gender-specific roles and norms are constructed in the artisanal mining sector (Dunn & Mathew 2015). In analysing gendered violence in the artisanal mining sector in Insiza, it was important not to restrict violence and conflict only to physical forms such as SGBV or domestic violence. Structural violence, such as economic inequality, marginalisation, and the ease of access by both men and women to justice, support, services, etc, matters also. Finally, there is a need to guard against a simplistic approach which equates men with violence, and women with victimhood. There are many men who are not violent and there are women, who for numerous reasons, may choose to resort to violence (Myrtilinen et al 2015). Since the organisation has a bias towards women, the research sought to understand the issues from the women’s perspectives. However, we took heed of Dunn & Matthew’s (2015) warning that ‘gender’ should not be conflated with ‘woman’. Our analysis sought to understand how men and women are affected differently because of how gender-specific roles and norms are constructed in particular contexts (*ibid*).

This research explored the gendered nature of conflict and violence experienced by communities due to the presence of artisanal mining in Insiza. The areas are characterised by artisanal mining and panning. The question being; what types of violence and conflicts related to artisanal mining in the wards are experienced and by whom?

4.0 Research context

EWf is currently implementing the '*Women as strategic partners in peace building*' project in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza District, Matabeleland South. The area is predominantly dry and

⁴ Emthonjeni Women’s Forum

susceptible to droughts as it falls under agricultural region 4. While the most suitable agricultural farming activity for the area is animal ranching, communities in Ward 1 and 2 tend to engage in subsistence farming and illegal artisanal mining. Furthermore, persistent droughts and shrinking grazing land make both farming and livestock breeding unviable. Of significance is the fact that the deteriorating macroeconomic conditions in Zimbabwe have combined with these factors to cause food insecurity and high levels of poverty⁵. As a result, these communities have had to adopt coping strategies, some of which include, the cutting, processing and selling of thatching grass, predominantly a women's activity, and illegal gold panning practised by both men and women. Although women undertake economic activities to support their families, they continue to be marginalised and lack control over family resources and productive assets⁶.

5.0 Research objectives

This study explored the state of gendered Conflict and violence in rural-based artisanal mining in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza district. It aimed to determine the existence and extent of gendered violence and conflicts in the two wards and their impact on women, children, and men. Who is more affected by the violence and how? The study sought to understand which types were prevalent and how women, in particular, were dealing with them; what help was available to the women to deal with the violence?

6.0 Methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach to understand the nature of gendered violence and conflicts, as it aimed to understand not only the kinds but also the ways different groupings in the communities were affected by them.

6.1 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions with women, who included peace committee members, formal and illegal miners, and ordinary housewives, were carried out. Although six FGDs were planned for women only 5 were held because Ward 2 only had four villages, as per the ward peace committee leader who assisted with the mobilisation in this ward. A further four FGDs for men were conducted. The men included miners, business people (mostly shop owners) and others involved in other jobs besides mining. Some villages were combined and brought to one central venue. Men and women's FGDs were held separately to allow participants to express their opinions more freely. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants in the FGDs by sex and number per FGD per site.

⁵ The United Nations common country analysis, Zimbabwe 2021.

⁶ EWF 2022

Table 1. Location, number and gender of participants

Ward	Number of FGDS	Site	Participants by gender		Total Participants
			women	men	
1	3 Female	Thandanani	12	7	19
	2 Male	Zhulube (Mpumelelo village)	8	6	14
		Gangabezi	6		6
2	2 Female	Marubamba	6	10	16
	2 Male	Vusisizwe	12	7	19
Total	9		44	30	74

6.2 Key Informants Interviews

KIIs were conducted with ward councillors, peace committee leaders, ZRP, District Development Coordinator's Office (formerly District Administrator) and village heads. Finding village heads to interview was a bit of a challenge because in the two wards most village heads are female, actively involved with the peace committee, and had already attended the women's interviews. Key informants were chosen for their knowledge of the area, and the work of EWF. Table 2 shows the list of key informants interviewed both at the district centre and the wards.

Table 2. List of Key Informants

Position	Number
Peace Committee leader	7
Councillor	2
Village Head	5
Zimbabwe Republic Police	2
Ministry of Women's Affairs	1
District Development Coordinator's office	2
Female victim of mine grab	1
Total	20

6.3 Rationale for research approach

Mafongoya *et al* (2021) have done an excellent job in studying gender-based violence from an artisanal mining work environment perspective. The context of the communities in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza district is that of local communities who interface with violence and conflicts emanating from their interaction with the effects of artisanal mining at the mining areas and within their villages. In other words, violence and conflicts are not confined to the mining

work environment only, but spill to their living spaces because mining has become an integral part of their existential norm. This study sought to understand how villagers, and not only those directly involved in mining, were affected by unpeaceful situations brought about by artisanal mining. The study therefore focused on conflict and violence experienced by ordinary villagers (men, women, girls, boys, etc.) in their day to day living experiences and as dealt with by the PCs in wards 1 and 2.

7.0 Findings on gendered violence and conflicts in wards 1 and 2 Insiza

Insiza, like most areas with artisanal mining, has its fair share of conflicts and violence that is as a direct result of the presence of this activity. Some of the issues are common everyday conflicts that have been exacerbated by the presence of artisanal mining activities. Almost every social grouping is affected in one way or another by the various conflicts and violence obtaining in this area. Generally, artisanal mining activities are a distance from the villages, but panning tends to happen closer to the homesteads. There are very few women who own claims or mines, most of them participate in panning activities, whenever necessary, or rent land from claim owners. In fact, respondents could not recall more than 10 women who own mines or claims, in some cases these claims have been left to the women by their husbands who have since died. On the other hand, scores of women were said to be involved in casual gold panning. There are certain types of conflicts and violence that are common to men, women and young people, while some are specific to particular groups. However, most participants indicated that almost all of the violence and conflicts, invariably tended to, one way or another, affect women more. The wards' proximity to the district centre makes them particularly vulnerable because of their easy accessibility.

Data indicates that local men and women who own claims and or mines appear to suffer the same fate, of being dispossessed of their mines by people who come with documents from the Mines Ministry, claiming ownership of the same, even though the locals had official documents and were up to date with their payments. At the time of the research, one male and one female were said to have recently lost their mines to such people. Similarly, both males and females were prone to violent seizure of productive mines or rich ore by machete gangs.

7.1 Administrative conflicts and violence

This cluster of issues is titled administrative as it is related to activities around the actual mining, the issuance of claim licences, and the day-to-day functioning of these mines.

7.1.1 Lack of transparency on how licences are issued by the Mines ministry

Participants indicated that one of the common conflicts they face is that of locals losing their mines to outsiders. This usually happens once it is realised that the mine is rich in gold. People from outside the area come with papers from the mines office in Gwanda (the nearest office serving Insiza) that indicate that the said mine or claim belongs to them, even though those mining there also have papers to prove ownership. Two such cases occurred days before this research and were highlighted by the respondents. One male and one female were said to have lost their mines in this manner. The female victim was interviewed and according to her, she had mined for eight years on this claim and had been paying all the necessary fees. She

also had all her papers in order but, she was surprised when a man arrived to claim her place and showed her papers from the Mine's Ministry purporting that this area belonged to him. According to her, she was given an area just outside her previous productive area and was supposed to start afresh after eight years of mining her claim. This issue had only just been reported to the peace committee leader of ward 1 a few days before the research. So far, all the people who have disposed the locals of their mines have been men suspected to have either paid bribes or friends of mines Ministry officials in Gwanda. The mine grabs are causing a lot of consternation, with community members feeling their rights to a livelihood being violated, and they don't know where to go for recourse. As one male participant pointed out;

The problem started way back, we are always reporting cases to the police. Once you have pegged your claim and it is discovered that there is money, someone will come with a letter and take over my place. No matter how much I try, I can never win that case... It's tough because they look at which [ethnic] side you are from, at the end the person with lots of money is the one who gets it. At the end there is some corruption that takes place and people pay bribes (Thandanani FGD participant).

For women, there was the added disadvantage of 'fearing big offices'. It is less likely that a woman from rural Insiza would visit the Ministry of Mines offices on their own, without assistance, to challenge the decision. Their argument was that a woman would never win against a man because men are more likely to be listened to and are much more ready to offer bribes than women.

Adding to the confusion and conflicts is the current government policy of issuing Exclusive Prospecting Orders (EPOs), which have effectively prevented small-scale miners from accessing more land to mine. This has particularly affected women in Insiza, because of the gendered view of mining as a male activity; women were late in seeking claims so they could mine legally. Women participants from Mpumelelo Village in ward 1 indicated that they once tried to apply for a licence as a group, but their efforts failed because of EPOs in their area. Similar sentiments were expressed by women at Marubamba Village in ward 2, with some indicating that they had actually paid the required fees but had not been issued licences either.

Violent takeovers of mines and gold ore

Both male and female participants in all wards reported that locals had been victims of violent mine takeovers and snatching of ore by machete gangs—who are usually outsiders. In artisanal mining circles, word spreads quite fast once a mine hits a rich vein or there is a gold rush in an area. Within a short space of time these gangs (from all over the country), armed with machetes and other weapons, will descend upon the area and forcefully take over the mine and confiscate all the ore that would have been dug up. They will only leave once they have exhausted the rich vein. All respondents attested that there had been several deaths and many injuries in the community inflicted by these gangs. They referred to these gangs as *aMabhambadzi*. Most of the deaths and injuries have been among young people. Since these people are not from the area and their origins unknown, once they commit these crimes they disappear from the area, and it is difficult to trace them or identify them.

Mine or claim owners acting deceitfully

Locals who work in other people's mines complained that mine owners often renege on agreements they would have made with them. For instance, before they start working together, they would have agreed to a certain percentage of shares for the gold extracted. However, once the mine starts producing they are told they are an employee and get paid far less than previously agreed. The person has no choice but to accept since there is no recourse available to them.

Women reported that since they don't have claims of their own, they struck agreements with the owners of the claims to mine there, but are not allowed to dig beyond 30 metres. Once they reach this depth the owners come and take over the mines. As the women pointed out, this is a form of cheap labour for mine owners, because they are unlikely to have reached the rich gold veins, which they said are beyond 30 metres. They might be moved to another site while the owner of the mine harvests their hard labour. More often than not, the women walk away with nothing to show for their hard labour.

Lawlessness and impunity

There is a general sense of lack of rule of law in artisanal mining, it is 'the survival of the fittest', as pointed out by one of the respondents from the DDC's office. Rules do not seem to apply to most of the outsiders who come into Insiza. The gangs with machetes rule the areas and do as they please. The local authorities and the police have struggled to maintain the rule of law. Because these people have access to easy money, they feel they are above the law and can buy their way out of any situation. Again, as per DDC respondent, "with money they get from the mines people believe they can buy freedom". Respondents agreed that these people act with impunity because they can bribe the authorities to let them go if caught. This, at some point, has caused friction between the police and the locals who felt let down by the police who, instead of protecting them, were influenced by money to shield criminals.

Environmental degradation and shrinking communal lands

Participants reported that there is huge environmental degradation caused by the indiscriminate artisanal mining and the massive pits left gapping all over the place. Some of the mounds are higher than a single-story house. The area is already arid and rocky, which means vegetation was already struggling to grow even before the damage caused by artisanal mining. The little vegetation there is slowly being depleted, which means livestock might soon run out of food and need to be taken further and further away from the villages. In addition, livestock is prone to falling into the pits causing a huge loss to the community. This may drive more families to become more and more dependent on artisanal mining in a space that is already crowded and has the potential to exacerbate the conflicts and violence that already exists.

Useable land is shrinking, the existence of EPOs is causing conflict between villagers and the owners of the EPOs since villagers can no longer fetch firewood in those areas as they would be deemed to be trespassing by the owners. One lady participant related an incident in which her children were forced to offload a cart full of firewood by a person who claimed they were trespassing on his land. This means that women, who are mostly responsible for this activity,

now have to travel further from their homes, thus exposing them to the possible dangers posed by the foreign artisanal miners.

7.2 Social conflicts/violence

These relate to all the social ills that plague wards 1 and 2 as a result of artisanal mining but are not directly related to the mining activity itself. Some of the issues are present also in non-mining areas but they have been made worse by the presence of artisanal mining. Social conflicts have a greater impact on building social cohesion and affect both women and men differently.

7.2.1 Robberies and muggings

The influx of unknown outsiders attracted by the gold in wards 1 and 2 has created insecurity among the locals. Participants pointed out that many of these people who are often wanted for crimes they committed elsewhere bring their criminal activities along when they come to Insiza. Many do not have identity documents and mine owners who are supposed to register all their employees don't bother to do that. This makes it easy for criminals to act with impunity because they are untraceable and they vanish once they have committed crimes. Once the gold has run-out or they are laid off, they become desperate and resort to muggings and robberies. As one participant explained, when locals fall on hard times they can ask for assistance from their neighbours, but these people cannot do the same. Almost all the areas visited indicated that their normal tranquil life had been affected by the presence of foreign criminals. They reported that people have been robbed of their money, from, or on their way to the shopping centres. Sometimes muggings happen during the day, especially to women. Women from Ukuzwisisa village in ward 2 spoke of a group of women who were robbed of their gold detecting machine during the day by a group of machete-wielding men. Usually, muggings and robberies that happen to men, happen in the evenings and when they are going home from beer-drinking sprees.

This problem was reported to be happening at most of the shopping centres but emphasis was placed on Theleka as being the worst. Here, outsiders rent the many illegal rooms behind the shops and nearby homesteads. The area is rife with sex workers and late-night partying. The sex workers work in partnership with these gangs to rob their clients of their money.

There has been an increase in livestock thefts in the wards. Locals believe that the people who stay at the mines slaughter their animals, particularly goats, to feed themselves. These suspicions only serve to create more conflict between locals and outsiders, adding to the already volatile situation.

7.2.2 Fights at the shopping centres

After hours, both locals and outsiders descend on the shopping centres for recreation and relaxation. Since the major activity is beer drinking, fights often break out between locals and the outsiders. Sometimes, it is grudges carried over from the mines, but mostly, the general disorderliness and rowdiness caused by outsiders, which often results in locals being attacked with machetes. Participants reported that in order to defend themselves, local men have also taken to arming themselves with machetes when they go beer drinking. Inevitably, when fights break out among themselves, the locals also use the machetes against each other.

These fights have an indirect impact on women, who may be affected if their husbands or sons are harmed or cause harm to others. It is the women who have to assume the burden of being peacemakers, carers of the injured, or bear the public shame brought about by their men's actions (see 7.3).

7.2.3 Early sex and teenage pregnancies

A source of conflict highlighted by participants is the high rate of teenage pregnancies, as young school girls are lured into early sex by the artisanal miners. Young girls are enticed by these 'sugar daddies' who buy them gifts such as clothes and cell phones but mostly with foodstuff. However, it was also pointed out that local young men and boys who have taken to mining also do the same to the school girls. This has resulted in many teenage pregnancies, leading to the disruption of these young girls' education. Since these men never intend to marry the girls, the burden of looking after their children falls on their parents who in most cases are struggling to look after their own children. At times, some of the girls once they get into these relationships become unruly, creating conflicts in the family. Where marriages may take place, they do not last long because they got married too early and are both too young to commit long term.

7.2.4 Child labour and school dropouts

Young boys have been victims of child labour resulting in a high rate of school dropouts as these young boys choose to leave school and join artisanal mining or panning. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, when schools were closed, many children joined the adults in mining for gold. When schools opened many refused to go back because they had tested money from gold mining. They no longer see a future in education as they can make money now for themselves, as is illustrated by comments by two of the respondents;

Mining has a big negative effect because children are dropping out of school to go to the mines. They no longer prioritise education because they see me, their parent, struggling; they see their teachers struggling, then they see their brothers who never completed form four— they failed, but they have a store, they drive cars. When you try to tell them about education, they will never understand you. He sees that his brother has US dollars, the teacher is carrying his bank card; they now know that teachers get paid through their bank cards, they don't have cash, you see. A child will go down a mine at just 12 years old, this is child abuse, its child labour. This had destroyed their future, they no longer have a future (FGD male participant).

Another danger is that our youths' thinking capacity has been destroyed by this. Our children no longer want to go to school. They will go to form one maybe for two terms when they think they have developed enough muscles they leave school and join gold panning. When they come with money every day, it kills their brains because they don't have a plan for the money they make. They just spend it all on beer (FGD female participant).

Artisanal mining and/or panning has a better appeal for them in the immediate, thus clouding their long-term futures. Unlike the girls who have organisations, such as the USAID

Dreams Project, working to improve their welfare, the boys do not seem to have any such support from organisations working in the area.

7.2.5 Breakdown of social norms

Domestic violence

Conflicts and violence in Insiza often result when a man goes for long periods of time without coming back home and when he comes back, he comes with nothing. Both male and female participants indicated that some men tend to abandon their homes once they score big, and live large with other women, neglecting their families. There are some men though who might send a bit of money to their families via money transfer agents. So, even when a man has genuinely struggled to find any gold, the wife will always be suspicious because there is no way of proving how much one made or when one does not find any gold. This causes tensions at home and causes some women to either go out with other men who also have the money to splash, or go panning for themselves, in order to survive. In a situation like this, peace and harmony is lost as husband and wife might keep their own earnings to themselves, instead of sharing as they would do under normal circumstances.

Breakdown in social and cultural values

The young boys and youths who come into money too early become a nuisance to the community as they insult their elders once drunk at night. The insults can be quite personal and unprovoked. It is usually these same young people who get into fights at the shops. The local communities live in fear of them as money has given them a sense of invincibility over their elders. At Thandanani in Ward 1, respondents reported that these young people would sometimes deliberately damage other people's properties and then offer to pay for it, simply because they have the money. It appears money earned from artisanal mining has some negative psychological effects on some people. As was said by a male respondent at Vusisizwe;

If you are not used to money, it gives you a sense of invincibility. You can tell an adult nonsense. If you have money, no girl can say no to you, they flock to you... The problem with gold is that sometimes when a young person strikes it rich and gets lots of money, even the old people start calling him mdala (a term usually used to refer to those older than oneself). Money gives you a great sense of invincibility, there is no girl that can turn you down. Even if you say to an adult "mdala, I want that girl over there, he will do everything in his power to make sure I get that girl because he wants my money".

Young people have therefore become unruly as money gives them a false sense of self-importance which sets them on a collision course with the adults. The social and cultural norms designed to keep order and decorum have been eroded. Participants also intimated the easy availability of drugs in the community which these young people abuse. It would appear as if these drugs might include hard-core drugs like cocaine because they referred to euphemisms such as 'snow' and 'white', among other names. These appear to be references to cocaine, although participants were not sure of the actual identity of the said drugs. This perhaps could explain some of the odd behaviours displayed by some of the young people in the area.

Reversal of roles between parents and children

A peculiar situation that exists in wards 1 and 2, is the fact that, because these teenage boys now have hard currency, as opposed to their parents who either have nothing or have the Zimbabwe currency, they have turned providers to their parents. This situation has caused an untenable situation in the area. The fact that parents now have to ask for money from their young children puts them in a difficult situation as they are no longer able to discipline their children for fear that the children might refuse to give them money next time they are in need. The children now do as they please and as a result, the children are now a law unto themselves. By being dependent on such young children the roles have become inverted. The children now treat their parents as the children. The parents become beholden to them and find themselves in a dilemma as they can no longer perform their parental duties. One participant said, “*abasakhuzeki ngoba impuphu isicelwa kibo abafana*” (We can no longer discipline these boys anymore since we now ask for mealie-meal from them). This reversal of roles is a source of conflict and a contributor to the breakdown in the moral social fibre.

7.3 Conflicts and violence experienced by women

Sex for protection

Women who sell food and other wares at the mines face harassment from unruly gangs. Sometimes these men take items on credit but when time to pay comes they refuse to pay, or simply vanish and move elsewhere. They may take the food by force with no intention of paying for it. In order to get protection, some women might be forced to have an affair with the most influential person in that mining area. This allows them to sell freely without being harassed by other miners. In addition, this person will direct ‘his people’ to buy from his ‘girlfriend’. In this way, the lady is assured of reliable sales

Fear of being violated

Female respondents indicated that they no longer feel safe in their communities. Women can no longer go into the bush alone to gather firewood or any other chores because of the influx of outsiders and the fear of falling victim to them. They have resorted to walking in groups, believing there is safety in numbers. Those who live alone or whose husbands might be away, find it difficult to sleep at night and wake up at every sound they hear outside fearing it might be the machete gangs raiding their homes. The anxiety and fear, they said, affect their mental health and psychological wellbeing.

Effects of indirect violence and conflicts on women

Women suffer psychologically due to the gendered nature of conflict caused by artisanal mining. Despite most of the fights and killings happening mostly within the male population—old or young—the female participants reported that they are affected too. It takes a heavy mental toll on the women, who are unsettled when their husbands and sons are out drinking, as they are not sure if they will return injured or dead, or having killed or injured someone themselves. Those who stay near the business centres, where the drinking happens, purported that whenever they hear noise from the shops they become anxious with worry as they wonder if their loved ones are involved in the fights. They only sleep when they hear

their sons or husbands coming back home. These three Gangabezi ladies expressed their situations succinctly;

You also would be having a son who drinks, when you hear the noise, you start wondering whether it is him who is being beaten. Maybe it is him doing the beating (participant 2).

Sometimes you hear people knocking at night to tell you your son has just killed someone (participant 5).

It is impossible to sleep because you know your son is not at home, you wake up every now and then to check if he is home yet. When you hear the door to his bedroom hut closing, only then can you really fall asleep because now you are satisfied he is now home safe. This is because we know he also has his own machete, but we know he will never admit to us he has it, you only hear that he has 'macheted' someone (participant 1).

Irresponsible husbands cause their wives and children to suffer when they are reckless with the money they make from mining. Those who disappear once they have 'hit a big score' (as they say) and only appear much later empty handed, or get drunk and have all the money stolen from them, leave their wives in a difficult situation as their wives now have to worry about how to feed the family. Conflicts between couples regularly flare up in the home when things are like this. Wards 1 and 2 are quite arid and the land no longer produces enough to feed a family, the drought experienced this year has only made a dire situation worse. Furthermore, the struggles and pressure to find ways of feeding her family affect her peace of mind. The profound effects of violence and conflicts caused by men on other men because of artisanal mining were best summed up by one lady from Vusisizwe village;

Women feel the pain because the husbands and children we are talking about are the ones who leave home and bring back their problems to us women... These men who drink a lot, when they leave home with money it never comes back. As for us who work at the shops, they will buy you a drink even if you didn't ask for it, yet their children don't have relish back home. Sometimes we ask "please buy me a drink", the man will give you money which is more than what a drink costs. The money is enough for us to buy relish for our children while his go hungry. They cause harm to their wives because they are reckless with the money which should be developing their families. They are also violent when their wives ask for money to buy food, they become violent and treat them harshly simply because they are men.

7.4 Conclusion

The nature of violence in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza is generally wide spread and affects every community formation. While normally, children between the ages of 13 to 15 years would be victims of violence, in this case they are both victims and perpetrators of violence. Women appear to bear the brunt of most conflicts and violence in the area. That is because they suffer from direct violence but are also adversely affected when their husbands or sons are either injured or injure others, or when they kill or are killed.

8. Recommendations

- There is need for transparency in how the Ministry of Mines officials process licence applications and allocations of claims. An investigation is necessary to uncover why locals frequently lose their mining claims to outsiders.
- Women need awareness and education on the laws and policies that govern artisanal mining in Zimbabwe.
- While all Zimbabweans are free to mine anywhere in the country, a law that favours locals, particularly women, is needed to bring sanity to this sector.
- Having a police post closer to the areas might improve policing.
- Government and local authority need to design policies and mechanism to reclaim mined land and enforcing the digging up of Insiza River.
- Some form of intervention focusing on the boys who drop out of school for mining is necessary, however, it should have more appeal than artisanal mining and panning.
- Special awareness and educational campaigns on the laws against early marriages, and the dangers of teen pregnancies, focusing on boys and men are needed to compliment work currently being done with women and girls.
- Communities need to be assisted to revive or [re]develop their sense of Ubuntu in order to repair the social fabric and strengthen community cohesion that has been eroded by the presence of artisanal mining.

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