

# ***Legacies of a nationwide crackdown in Zimbabwe: Operation Chikorokoza Chapera in gold mining communities\****

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## ABSTRACT

Although conflict in Zimbabwe's diamond mining sector has recently received much international scrutiny, very little research has examined conflict in Zimbabwe's gold mining sector. This article analyses how a nationwide crackdown called *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* ('No More Illegal Mining') affected – and 'disciplined' – livelihoods in profound ways in both licensed and unlicensed gold mining regions. Drawing on interviews conducted between 2006 and 2013 with artisanal miners in the Insiza, Umzingwani and Kadoma areas as well as miners who crossed the border to Mozambique, the study reveals how a highly politicised crackdown led to uneven consequences. The analysis highlights both structural and physical violence, with more than 25,000 miners and traders arrested between 2006 and 2009 and more than 9,000 still imprisoned in 2013. Situating the crackdown within evolving political and economic interests, the study contributes to an understanding of how simplified discourses on 'eradicating illegal mining' mislead and mask power dynamics, while policing activities transform patterns of resource control. The study also emphasises that conceptualisations of the crackdown's legacy should carefully consider the agency of artisanal miners' associations, which, in some cases, have been actively seeking to resist coercive policies and rebuild livelihoods in the aftermath of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*.

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*Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* took the food away . . . without gold there is no food. (Artisanal gold miner in Insiza District, 4.5.2009)

Many of the small-scale miners associations were completely disbanded during *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* . . . but some stayed together and the Zimbabwe Miners Federation has had to become stronger, to make our voices heard. (Member of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation, Insiza District, 9.12.2012)

#### INTRODUCTION

In many regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, the mining sector is expanding rapidly and attracting considerable attention as a source of political struggle and conflict. Ever since the discovery of diamond deposits in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands in 2006, a burgeoning body of scholarly literature has been examining the politics of conflict in the diamond mining sector in Zimbabwe (Nyamunda & Mukwambo 2012; Nyota & Sibanda 2012; Towriss 2013; Spiegel 2014). However, little research has been devoted to the socio-political dimensions of conflict in Zimbabwe's gold mining sector, which provides livelihoods to a considerably larger number of people, with as many as two million people across the country deriving livelihoods from artisanal and small-scale gold mining (Shoko & Veiga 2004; Mawowa 2013). The present article addresses this research gap by examining legacies of a violent period in Zimbabwe's gold mining history when, between 2006 and 2009, the government conducted a nationwide crackdown called *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* (meaning 'No More Illegal Mining' in Shona). The operation, led by the Zimbabwe Republic Police with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and other government agencies, was presented by state officials as an effort at bringing illegal mining under control, stopping smuggling and halting environmental degradation (Spiegel 2009). The article explores the questions: How did *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* affect livelihoods in artisanal gold mining communities? What are the long-lasting socio-political legacies of the crackdown? The study contributes to a growing body of scholarship addressing the policing of artisanal mining in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Duffy 2007; Hilson & Yakovleva 2007; Geenen 2012; Maconachie 2014) while also responding to recent calls in the literature for more empirically rooted and historically specific studies on the complex ramifications of state reconfigurations in rural Zimbabwe (Alexander & McGregor 2013).

In broad scholarly accounts of resource politics in Africa, theories of 'state failure' have frequently been embraced to explain conflict and

disorder in contexts where official state institutions have (or appear to have) limited relevance, in some cases modelling analyses around the much-cited work of Chabal & Daloz (1999) or Reno (1999). West African contexts of ‘weak states’ have often guided meta-theoretical analyses. However, with respect to contemporary struggles in Zimbabwe, Alexander & McGregor (2013) caution against oversimplifications in theorising ‘that commonly assume [state] “weakness” and “disorder” and which diminish state institutions to a facade for “real” or “shadow” economies’ (p. 750). In understanding the politics surrounding elite actors’ accumulation strategies in Zimbabwe, they caution against downplaying the actual on-the-ground functioning and impacts of state power, where post-revolutionary discourses of empowerment have provided ideological justification by elites for heavy-handed state interventions that have a strong ‘disciplining’ character. Conceptualising the experiences of a state crackdown involves complex dilemmas in Zimbabwe, where state power has been experienced in a myriad of complex and idiosyncratic ways. The study thus contributes to debates in wider African studies literature addressing political contexts where the ‘reach’ of the state has been extensive and where the indirect and direct effects of politicised state surveillance have emerged in diverse forms (Purdeková 2011; McGregor 2013). To address one particular arena of ‘experiencing the state’ in Zimbabwe, this study draws on interviews with artisanal gold miners and other people living in gold mining areas to ascertain how *Operation Chikorozza Chapera* impacted daily life, and it provides the first systematic study of the legacies of this operation.

Fieldwork for the study involved in-depth interviews conducted between 2006 and 2013 in gold mining regions in the districts of Insiza, Umzginwani and Kadoma as well as Bulawayo and Harare; it also involved participant observation work analysing the advocacies of artisanal and small-scale miners associations during this period, as well as interviews along the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border in gold mining sites in the Chimanimani highlands. Challenging the dominant government discourses on *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* as a mechanism needed for ‘restoring order and sanity’, the study shows how the multifarious consequences of the operation were at odds with its purported objectives, providing a vivid illustration of the consequences of a politically volatile policing apparatus that was increasingly engaging in violent displacement as part of a strategy of state rule (Hammar *et al.* 2010; Groves 2012). Mabhena (2012) and Kamete (2008) provide contextual analysis of the growth of artisanal gold mining as a livelihood

strategy in different regions of Zimbabwe, and Mawowa (2013) examines political patronage in relation to mining, providing important contributions to an evolving debate on elite resource capture. However, the consequences of policing activities that emerged from *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* have been significantly under-scrutinised by the research community. A parallel can be drawn between *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* and *Operation Murambatsvina*, a violent crackdown in urban slums and informal urban economies in 2005 that has received in-depth political and sociological analysis (Bratton & Masunungure 2006; Potts 2006; Fontein 2009; Musoni 2010; Kamete 2012). Similarities can be seen in how both operations involved languages of 'modernisation' to rationalise coercion, serving economic and political ends of the elite, with devastating effects on marginalised segments of society. Yet, as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre observed, '*Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* attracted less international attention than *Operation Murambatsvina*, in part because what happened in the mining areas was less visible than what happened in the towns and cities' (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2011).

Bringing 'visibility' to the experiences of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* requires attention to the diverse locales in which gold mining was occurring and highly diverse people involved as artisanal miners. The fieldwork thus included visits to primary ore gold mining and milling locations as well as alluvial riverbed gold panning sites, and notably included interviews with artisanal miners at gold mining sites on a Canadian company's mining claim in Kadoma, an Insiza District Member of Parliament's mining claim, a riverbed gold mining site that was temporarily run by a Chinese mining company in a water catchment where Insiza District intersects with Umzingwani District, an Israeli-owned gold mill in Insiza, and two mills owned and run by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, among other places. The interview selection process involved strategic sampling and snowball sampling and formed part of a PhD dissertation that drew from interviews that took place over a seven-year period with more than 150 artisanal miners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. In some cases, the artisanal miners were former subsistence farmers, while others had a long family history of gold mining; in some cases, interviewees were temporary artisanal miners who had recently entered the sector (e.g. former school teachers). Some interviewees identified as 'local' to the area in which they mined, while other artisanal miners interviewed had travelled from afar. In some cases, artisanal miners who were interviewed in 2006 or 2007 were

interviewed again in 2009, 2012 or 2013 to facilitate a longitudinal analysis.

Working with artisanal and small-scale miners associations, the author was afforded access to a large number of gold mining sites and interviewees were often very willing and eager to share views and introduce the author to others. Nonetheless, there were significant challenges in the field research as the study took place during a period of significant economic hardship and political instability. Sensitivities relating to unlicensed mining activities were carefully respected and identities of informants have been anonymised. In addition to conducting interviews on-site in gold mining locations, interviews also took place at homes of artisanal miners, bars, vehicles and other locations. The validity and reliability of data was enhanced by triangulating fieldwork interview data with multiple sources, combining primary data sources with secondary sources and public domain documents (e.g. legal court proceedings relating to specific mines visited and parliamentary records).

To contextualise the consequences of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, the first section below briefly discusses the government's official rationales for the crackdown, which drew on economic and environmental discourses as well as 'the need for order'. The article then highlights how the crackdown resulted in physical violence as well as devastating effects on livelihoods. The analysis provides a micro-level descriptive account of policing artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) in areas where no mining licences were held as well as where ASM activities were informally occurring on sites where companies held mining and milling licences. The consequences reveal the failure of the operation with respect to its own stated objectives. To appreciate the legacy of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, the article discusses not only the impacts that occurred at the time but also the highly contested long-term nature of imprisonment, with extensive incarceration persisting to 2013 for small-scale gold mining and trading-related offences that occurred as early as 2006. While these experiences highlight punitive and repressive manifestations of state power, the analysis also situates the lasting impacts of the crackdown during the post-2009 era of a 'Government of National Unity' – made up of the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – a temporary arrangement that created what Cheeseman & Tendi (2010) aptly call the 'politics of continuity' (p. 203). The analysis explores challenges faced by riverbed gold panners and primary ore small-scale miners (the former having been

completely criminalised in 2006 and the latter only partially criminalised), emphasising that the structural violence of the operation marked a turning point in rural relations that transformed patterns of resource control.

The final part of the article's analysis addresses the agency of marginalised groups affected by coercive state tactics. In analysing the impacts of *Operation Murambatsvina* on urban dwellers, Kamete (2010, 2012) argued that it is vital to understand the impact of coercive power in Zimbabwe in terms of its effects on the agency of displaced communities and their recovery strategies. His approach also calls for attention to 'mutating practices that are no more than by-products of trial and error, always powered by the desire to defend threatened livelihood practices' (Kamete 2010: 56). A nuanced understanding of agency is equally important when conceptualising *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*. The article thus examines some of the advocacies of artisanal miners and mining association leaders that spoke on their behalf, particularly the Zimbabwe Miners Federation (ZMF), an umbrella organisation that represents 30 small-scale miners' associations across the country.

CONTEXTUALISING *OPERATION CHIKOROKOZA CHAPERA*  
AS THE ECONOMY PLUNGED

Zimbabwe's protracted economic crisis has been interpreted in a myriad of ways since 2000 (Chaumba *et al.* 2003; Bond 2007; Bracking 2009) and, as Hammar (2008) argued, state-induced displacements (both urban and rural) have long been central to political strategies of state-making in Zimbabwe. Recent literature highlights the particularly volatile political atmosphere for managing the economy in the post-2005 hyperinflationary crisis period (Rutherford 2012; Sachikonye 2012). The dramatically escalating inflation levels in 2006 and 2007 prompted the government to take drastic 'reform' measures that resulted in new forms of economic and social 'disciplining' (Jones 2010a, 2010b). International critics of ZANU-PF widely asserted that the accelerated decline of Zimbabwe's economy might leave President Mugabe 'without the cash to pay off those on whom his political survival will depend' (Bremmer 2007). Minerals – particularly gold and diamonds – were widely regarded as opportunities for corruption (Moore & Mawowa 2010). Meanwhile, scholars have recognised that theories of politicised resource control should not overshadow the increasingly important role that ASM – often with very rudimentary gold extraction

practices – was playing as a survival strategy to marginalised segments of society (Tendai *et al.* 2012; Mawowa 2013). In this sense, gold extraction emerged as an ever-more politically ambiguous sector, where informal livelihoods and elite actor's interests sometimes co-exist but also compete, resonating in certain ways with observations elsewhere in Africa on the political character of 'criminalised networks' in the mineral extraction sector (e.g. Duffy 2007).

The government's longstanding requirement (under the Gold Trade Act of 1940) that all gold mined be sold to the Reserve Bank fuelled smuggling to unprecedented degrees in 2006, as the prices for gold provided by the cash-strapped state were far less than could be obtained by selling through other means.<sup>1</sup> As hyperinflation levels rose, the government's effort to halt illegal gold mining and smuggling was portrayed as central to state security, and both the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) became increasingly engaged in policing the gold sector. As state institutions were being rapidly reconfigured to shore up economic and political resources for the ruling party, the Reserve Bank Governor, Gideon Gono, was empowered by President Mugabe to seize control of ministry functions across almost every ministry in the government (Sachikonye 2012), and this included functions dealing with mining. In 2006, shortly before *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* was launched, statements by the Governor Gono alluded to small-scale gold miners, millers and traders as a rapidly growing threat to the nation. His language early in 2006 decried 'the rampant illegal dealing in gold by small scale miners and custom millers' – in a report entitled 'Forms of Foreign Currency Leakages in the Economy' (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe 2006) – creating the rhetorical justifications for a nationwide crackdown later that year.

As the environmental hazards of small-scale gold mining are well known – and a frequent point of focus in the scholarly community (Zwane *et al.* 2006; Tunhuma *et al.* 2007), these concerns were also invoked as a reason for the crackdown. In rationalising the complete criminalisation of riverbed alluvial gold panning, the Minister of Tourism and Environment, Mr Nhema, commented: 'As government, we have banned [gold] panning activities because we have collectively come to the conclusion that the environmental costs emanating from the panning activities far outweigh the benefits accruing to the panners' (Xinhua 2007). In the remaining part of the gold mining sector – primary ore (land-based) gold mining – opportunities to operate in the legal sphere were still theoretically available, but the

imposition of new barriers to the acquisition of licences, with the sudden introduction (in January 2007) of prohibitively costly licensing and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements<sup>2</sup> (Spiegel 2009; Kanyenze *et al.* 2011) made it exceedingly difficult for poverty-driven artisanal miners to operate legally. In rationalising coercive policies and policing during *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, some senior officials working in the Ministry of Mines in Harare envisioned the crackdown to be necessary as a way of setting the scene for the renewal of the sector and the transformation of ASM.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, crackdowns were seen as ‘formalisation’ efforts that could be (ostensibly) rationalised on ‘development’ grounds. While the operation began as an initiative of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Republic Police to curb smuggling in the most active mining districts (including Insiza District) in December 2006, by early 2007 it morphed into a nation-wide policing initiative in which all types of primary ore gold miners – both licensed and unlicensed – were targeted.

#### IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF THE CRACKDOWN

##### *Diverse experiences of policing: immediate impacts*

Just as ‘state power creates, through its administrative and bureaucratic practices, a world of meanings’ (Mbembe 1992: 2), state power, as channelled through *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, produced a world of diverse impacts. Interviewees highlighted multiple dimensions of the violence that ensued. One riverbed panner who had worked in Umzingwani River (near where Umzingwani River intersects with Insiza River) expressed how he saw ‘hundreds of miners shackled overnight, without food or water’.<sup>4</sup> A young miner at 20 years old, he also articulated his anxiety with these words: ‘My brother was arrested and I don’t think I can ever mine again. I don’t know what I’ll do.’<sup>5</sup> In gold mining and milling sites in Insiza District, the word ‘ruthless’ was often used to describe police, and interviewees explained that groups of police circled miners and trapped them with no opportunity for escape. An artisanal miner who worked as part of a group without a licence in Filabusi (the district capital of Insiza District, which was heavily dependent on gold mining)<sup>6</sup> described how police squads would form a horn shape so that miners were trapped: ‘The police tried to get us by surrounding us. They got some of us and some *makorokozas* [illegal miners] are languishing in jail.’ Another interviewee, a 31-year-old gold



panner whose account was similar, indicated that police for the operation were selected deliberately from out-of-town areas: 'The police are not from Insiza District. They [police authorities] took the police from other provinces ... This way the police are not sympathetic to us.'<sup>7</sup> In both these accounts, interviewees described shootings, deaths and drownings in rivers while trying to evade police. These occurrences also were acknowledged by some government officials when interviewed about the fallout.<sup>8</sup>

Members of the Filabusi Miners Association emphasised that towns entirely dependent on gold mining were transformed in Insiza and Umzingwani Districts.<sup>9</sup> The impacts of the crackdown, beginning in December 2006, became more wide-ranging and severe in 2007 and 2008 as police presence increased in gold-rich areas. Both legal and informal small-scale gold miners across the country were shut down in 2007 by the Ministry of Environment, which cited non-compliance with environmental regulations as the rationale. Different kinds of violence thus became visible. On one hand, violence was associated with the cracking down itself, and some of the accounts in the interviews indicated that police activities involved stealing miners' equipment, physically beating up miners with batons, occasional shootings and burning down huts in some cases.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, another form of violence emerged through preventing miners from engaging in gold mining, as livelihoods for men and women were extinguished and possibilities for earning were constrained. Where physical violence was not inflicted, the more silent violence of income deprivation took hold. Food stalls closed for business. In some cases, the closure of mining was believed to have led to increased robberies and other crimes in what had formerly been mining-dependent communities.<sup>11</sup> As expressed by one local government official in Insiza District who was also visibly frustrated with what was going on, some of the gold miners in the district were reduced to using very labour-intensive hand milling at night so as to evade the police, while others stopped mining and mineral processing activities altogether. Using the memorable image of music, the same government official noted that 'the music stopped ... the town life has shut down ... The mining has been an essential part of my home town's existence.'<sup>12</sup> This insight resonated vividly with the findings of Mhiripiri (2013), whose analysis indicated that the music industry in Zimbabwe suffered considerably due to *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, as musicians had depended on *makorokozas* (artisanal miners) as audiences, and found that their support base was now 'dispersed.'<sup>13</sup>

As a gold digger and part-time ore transporter in Filabusi noted, when executing the crackdown, it mattered little to police whether miners had proper papers or not, stating,

*Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* was not only targeting illegal mineral buyers, but properly registered miners too. The arrests came and came. The law enforcement agents were oblivious of the proper documentation [certificates of registration, permits to transport ore, and log of gold sales, etc.] according to the Mines and Minerals Act.<sup>14</sup>

As one government interviewee acknowledged, reflecting on the Insiza area (which was known to some interviewees in Harare as a particularly violent example of where *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* impacted miners), ‘the police were out of control.’<sup>15</sup> In contrast, some artisanal miners worked in licensed mining areas that were controlled by powerful companies and Zimbabwean war veterans who were politically well-connected – and did not experience the negative impacts of the operation to the same degree. For example, at Pansikwe Mine in Filabusi, certain ZANU-PF elites were able to continue mining and even take over other people’s mining sites amid the confusion. These tensions led to conflicts and legal court challenges by frustrated neighbours who sought to resist Pansikwe’s growing stranglehold on mining in the region.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, a ZMF member explained that in the Kadoma region, there were informal arrangements that had allowed some ASM workers to mine in companies’ concessions, but, once *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* began, those relationships began to fall apart and turn sour, and some miners interviewed spoke of intensified exploitation. Some companies that previously allowed ASM workers on their territory were suddenly blaming those same workers and rhetorically supporting the government’s police activities. According to the Chief Mining Commissioner, few mining companies in Zimbabwe had formalised agreements to allow artisanal miners to work on their land.<sup>17</sup> Discussion with ZMF members suggested that, although the notion of tributing<sup>18</sup> was supposed to apply whenever companies lease areas to miners, this rarely was implemented. Despite the existence of policies to formalise relationships between ASM groups and mining license holders, and despite policies to enable small-scale mining to be legitimised, these policies had limited relevance during *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*.

An example of a licensed mining operation (where artisanal miners were also working) that was significantly impacted by the crackdown was a gold mill near Esigodini, in Umzingwani, closed for a year and a half due to *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, according to the mill owner.<sup>19</sup> The

mill owner was still (in December 2012) recovering from *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* and conveyed painful recollections of when police officers and ZANU-PF youth came to the area with firearms and turned the area into what he termed a 'battleground site' in 2007 and 2008. Artisanal and small-scale miners who brought ore to the mill were chased away by police and beaten up and shot at, according to his description. In other cases in nearby mills, the crackdown had the effect of increasing the amount of bribe money that miners had to pay the police; other mill owners described how they would give police officers meals, cash and gold as bribe money, though poorer miners usually could not afford to make such bribes.

Crackdowns also had the effect of shifting the geography of mining rather than stopping mining; for instance, crackdowns triggered a migration of some miners to the Chimanimani mountains, as found in interviews conducted on the Mozambique side of the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border. A discussion during interviews<sup>20</sup> with two 21-year-old men on the Mozambique side of the border highlighted experiences of having to flee the Kadoma area – where they grew up and had worked as miners until the crackdown:

**Question:** Were you able to mine in the Kadoma area?

**Miner 1:** Yes, but then *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* made us stop and we had to move.

**Question:** Did you find it easier or harder mining when you came here [here at the Mozambique–Zimbabwe border]?

**Miner 1:** It is harder. You know, we had to leave our families behind.

**Question:** Are there police crackdowns here too?

**Miner 2:** The police are not affecting us here and we think it is ok.

Dondeyne *et al.* (2009) and Ndunguru *et al.* (2006) documented some of the tensions surrounding gold mining in the Chimanimani mountains along the Mozambique–Zimbabwe border, discussing three regions on the Mozambique side with 1,050 Zimbabwean migrants working as artisanal gold miners.<sup>21</sup> *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* provides a sector-specific context for conceptualising 'how the processes and experiences of displacement have reconfigured Zimbabwean geographies, political economies and social forms' as well as contributed to 'processes of change within neighbouring countries' (Hammar *et al.* 2010: 264).

Ultimately, while narratives of micro-politics are often contested, some facts have garnered widespread consensus. First, by April 2007, after just the first five months of the crackdown, police had arrested an estimated 25,000 small-scale miners across Zimbabwe.<sup>22</sup> Second, the crackdown forced many people out of their livelihoods – in some cases, creating fear in ways that motivated miners never to return to mining, while in other cases, creating an impossible-to-control mining environment as a result of cat-and-mouse relations with police. In some areas, police intimidation created a culture of rushed mining activity, leaving rivers more prone to environmental mismanagement and creating a scenario where mercury use was more precarious in the gold amalgamation process. Third, in addition to the operation failing to meet its purported environmental and economic objectives, small-scale miners argued that the policing activities produced far more ‘disorder’ than they suppressed, with multiple police CID units, military officials, CIO spies and ZANU-PF youth squads involved. Amid hyperinflationary gold pricing imbalances, bureaucratic delays in paying producers for gold output, institutional confusion and conflict, Zimbabwe’s official gold production declined from 11 tonnes in 2006 to just over 7 tonnes in 2007, the lowest level of output in over a hundred years (Central Statistics Office of Zimbabwe 2008). Fourth, while the crackdown left the country’s national budget poorer as a result of expensive police work – spending a great deal on fuel, among other costs – it was well-known that certain businessmen became richer, profiting from the illegal gold trade. In the early period of the crackdown, allegations were publicly made by the Police Commissioner that elite politicians were benefiting from the unregulated gold rush.<sup>23</sup> Later on, a wider spectrum of political elites was identified as profiting heavily as *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* proceeded (including powerful Members of Parliament and Gideon Gono, Governor of the Reserve Bank).

In some sense, a parallel exists with what Fontein (2009) described as ‘the contradictory experience of the apparently arbitrary application and often extreme, sometimes violent, execution of the operation’ in reference to *Operation Murambatsvina*. *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* highlighted the apparently ‘arbitrary state’ in producing profound uncertainty in mining areas; simultaneously, given the lucrative value of gold, the deployment of violence and the production of confusion served multifarious economic and political ends. The display of state power was such that one commentator concluded that the operation was not just about accumulating wealth but also about deliberately dispossessing others as a form of political disciplining: ‘Make no mistake,

this loss of livelihood is not an incidental side-effect of the operation, but it is its very *raison d'être* (Sokwanele 2007).

*Legacies of Operation Chikorokzoza Chapera as a repressive phenomenon*

The physical impact of the crackdown transformed countless gold mining areas – and beyond. Roadblocks were set up throughout the country to search private and public transport vehicles for minerals, and those suspected of illegality were arrested. As a member of the ZMF noted, the intense and at times brutal crackdowns were clearly not proportional to the ‘crime’ of unlicensed mining; the attacks on miners seemed to be routinely excessive, revealing a level of violence that defied a simplistic utilitarian logic of material/resource control.<sup>24</sup> As part of a group discussion with ZMF members in April 2009, participants were asked to list five of the most important impacts of the crackdown for miners, and the following points emerged: (1) The police ruthlessly destroyed human dwellings, saying they were improper; this was despite the fact that the Mines and Minerals Act Section 175 states that a registered miner can have/erect temporary shelter. (2) The police confiscated gold (and sold the gold to Reserve Bank officials). (3) Mills were closed because they were said not to have Environmental Impact Assessment Certificates. (4) Tools were confiscated. (5) Claims/mills were closed because they were said not to have fences; this was despite the fact that the Mines and Minerals Act states that miners should fence the workings and not the whole 10 hectares. According to the Chief Executive Officer of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation, more than 25,000 registered small-scale miners were closed down in 2007.<sup>25</sup>

The legacy of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* lasted well after its official end in 2009, and artisanal and small-scale miners often spoke of miners still being in prison for legal infractions from as early as 2006. Table I provides the numbers of prisoners listed in the Magistrate Courts as being in prison in December 2012 for violation of the Mines and Minerals Act, Gold Trade Act and the Precious Stones Act. Consistent with what was reported above based on interviews with various artisanal and small-scale miners, a former prison guard interviewed that December explained that these numbers included those arrested for mining illegally as well as those arrested for trading gold illegally, while noting that gold miners were sometimes arrested simply for *possessing* gold without a licence.<sup>26</sup> Some miners were reportedly given *five-year* prison sentences for possessing small amounts of gold – even less than a gram, according to public reports.<sup>27</sup>

TABLE I  
Miners and Mineral Traders in Seven Prisons in December 2012

Location of prison	Number of prisoners listed as incarcerated for infractions under the Mines and Minerals Act, Gold Trade Act and Precious Stones Act
Kwekwe	2,050
Kadoma	889
Mutare	1,739
Hwange	350
Masvingo	2,165
Gweru	1,650
Gwanda	3,000

The Gwanda prison location listed in Table I covered mines around Filabusi and the gold mining regions visited in Insiza District. As interviewees in Insiza had emphasised, police were particularly unsympathetic there.<sup>28</sup> The number of prisoners in Gwanda may be higher than other regions partly because there were large numbers of miners in this region and partly because of the nature of the policing. These policing and incarceration dynamics may be analogous in other districts, though the degree to which that is the case falls beyond the scope of this study. The point in including the numbers in Table I is not to suggest that these are the exact numbers of mining-related prisoners in Zimbabwe; in fact, the seven prisons listed here are not the only prisons in Zimbabwe. Rather, the point is that incarcerations were conditioning the discourses that small-scale miners used when speaking about the challenges that *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* created. Small-scale miners were widely aware of the unprecedented scale of imprisonment in the mining sector.

Importantly though, the ability to obtain the numbers listed in Table I is itself an illustration of the changing national political context for debating mining sector injustices in 2012 – as parliamentarians officially requested these numbers; in fact, the Zimbabwe Miners Federation had been given the official mandate from the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mining to document the number of miners in prison. In this sense, Table I can be understood to be a reflection of the fragmentation within the institutional apparatuses of the government in dealing with the aftermath of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*. Notably, moderate ZANU-PF lawmaker Edward Chindori-Chininga served as head of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and supported an enquiry into the numbers of artisanal miners in prison – at a time when various other ZANU-PF lawmakers were far less supportive.

A week before he died in 2013, he released a scathing report of the Minister of Mines' (Obert Mpofu's) corruption (Chindori-Chingina 2013). Chindori-Chingina's death in June 2013 in a car accident was seen by the ZMF leaders to be a considerable blow to the cause of ASM sector empowerment.

*Legacies of lost rights and post-crackdown rent-seeking*

After policing activities started to subside, there were renewed attempts by small-scale miners at gaining formal legal recognition in 2009, albeit often unsuccessfully. In interviewing primary ore gold miners at their mining locations in Insiza, Umzingwani and Kadoma, it was ascertained that small-scale miners often did not know how to register for mining claims or simply had no access to registration opportunities. These problems were exacerbated by the widespread lack of faith that proper registration procedures would be followed by mining licensing authorities. Many women and men involved in artisanal mining indicated clearly that they would like to become 'legal', even if it meant paying more taxes and fees, but they were not sure how or whether their finances could cover the actual (official and 'unofficial') costs of licences.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, although national laws provided some degree of space for legalising hard rock gold mining, the laws passed during the crackdown precluded Rural District Councils from being able to offer licences for riverbed panning. The consequences of the lost right to pan for alluvial gold in riverbeds constitutes a particularly important and controversial legacy of the crackdown, as discussed below.

Illustratively, in Insiza District, one interviewee (a small-scale miner with extensive experience in the district) reported that in July 2010 central government authorities (in the Ministry of Mines) had already taken steps to license a Russian company to conduct alluvial gold extraction in Insiza River.<sup>30</sup> He suggested that this move would preclude the Insiza Rural District Council, which prior to the crackdown had been allowed to issue licences for riverbed panning (Maponga & Ngorima 2003), from being able to submit plans to the central government for re-establishing the riverbed alluvial gold panning programmes for indigenous workers. While the Russian company ultimately chose to mine in a different district, interviews during fieldwork with Rural District Council officers from Insiza and Umzingwane confirmed in 2012 that six Chinese mining companies had secured special grants from the Ministry of Mines (each requiring a US\$10,000 payment to the Mining Commissioner) for mechanised river mining.

A senior member of the Umzingwani Rural District Council articulated frustrations when noting that ‘the Chinese are too big and connected to powerful people. They cannot be resisted, but we have received a computer and some cement for a school [from the Chinese company].’<sup>31</sup> Admitting that this ‘contribution’ to the community was far too little, he was angry with the environmental destruction caused by the company. The Chinese company used large excavators and bulldozers – equipment that had not previously been utilised in this river – and concerns were raised that this negatively impacted the environment (as well as precluding local panners from panning for alluvial gold in the river). According to a member of the Filabusi Miners Association, both MDC-affiliated and ZANU-PF-affiliated Council Members in Insiza District were also angry about the Chinese company’s destructive activities in the river, a major water source in the area, and they were reportedly active in pressuring the company to leave in 2012. The monetary benefits of this type of ‘temporarily formalised’ river mining were also questioned, with miners noting that it was unlikely that any taxes from the mine went to the government.

The example above highlights just one specific site’s legacy from *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* – loss of local panners’ rights and greater environmental threats from a foreign well-connected business. The case here illustrates how the crackdown paved the way for new forms of accumulation by dispossession and political alliances that undermined the interests of local populations. More widely, artisanal and small-scale gold miners emphasised in 2012 that even though police crackdowns were not as common as they had been in 2009, government rent-seeking was an ongoing source of frustration. New licensing fees introduced in 2012 added substantial new barriers for small-scale miners operating in primary ore mining. The Ministry of Mines increased the cost of ordinary prospecting licences (applicable to any small-scale miner) from US\$300 to US\$1,000 (ZMF leaders proposed a compromise price of US\$500). The Ministry of Mines also increased the price of permits to transport ore (applicable to most primary ore small-scale miners or mine managers) from US\$20 to US\$1,000 (ZMF leaders proposed a more marginal compromise at US\$50). According to small-scale miners interviewed in December 2012, most small-scale miners could not afford the high costs for licence fees. Some miners felt that they had to wait until the fees were lowered before officially resuming their mining operations. Milling centre costs had also been raised in 2012, with milling license fees raised from US\$2,000 to US\$8,000 (millers also issued complaints to the Ministry of Mines).



The notion that *Operation Chikorokoza* led to ‘lost rights’ needs to be understood in relation to a highly dynamic and fragmented political state, in which, as discussed by McGregor (2013) and Alexander (2013), official state power structures were shaped profoundly by evolving non-official power structures of ZANU-PF. While institutions in government that had not previously been responsible for mining (particularly the Reserve Bank) sought to control a number of gold mining sites, mining surveillance programmes that emerged from *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* involved increasingly complex networks of ZANU-PF elites, police squads and Reserve Bank officials. In April 2009, a small-scale gold miner in Insiza District looked back at the changing dynamics of state intervention in the following way:

The government has attacked the gold miners. They [government officials] say we have to organise and become licensed but it doesn't matter if we are licensed or not. The police are invading our claims and, you know, there's many problems with these guys [police]. The rivers are polluted yes, the environmental damage is there, but the people are hungry ... and the police are arresting us and beating us up and taking our equipment. It doesn't matter if we have all our correct papers [for mining licences] ... There used to be good programmes here to teach miners how to be responsible and the government guys were involved ... Those days are history.<sup>32</sup>

Three observations are noteworthy to help understand this interviewee's perspective. First, his words reinforce a widely held view that gold mining had become an increasingly important economic coping strategy in Insiza District. This miner, as well as other gold miners and local government officers, estimated that most people in Insiza District depended directly on gold mining for income. One Rural District Council member estimated that more than half of the population depended directly on gold mining. Second, the above miner's words are also illustrative of the awareness that government authorities had previously been far more supportive. His language illustrates the relevance of situating contemporary political challenges in the context of drastically reconfigured state authority. Third, the interviewee also alluded to the political nature of mineral resource access, whereby the acquisition of any mining licences would have required paying large bribes to Ministry of Mines officials amounting to hundreds of US dollars, even prior to government's abandonment of the Zimbabwe dollar and the adoption of the US dollar as an official currency in 2009. Such bribes were wholly separate from bribes to police.

The interviewee's account thus illustrates the need for distinguishing between what Sachikonye (2012) calls a ‘development state, which

prioritizes economic and social development' and a 'predatory state, which consumes the surpluses of the economy as government offices become income generating sinecures' (Sachiknoye 2012: 23). Although this dichotomy is never a tidy one and elements of both 'development' and 'predatory' state intervention can co-exist, Insiza's gold mining sector was profoundly impacted by a shift towards predation and the increased deployment of violent state power, producing considerable fear among miners. Such problems also call attention to the lack of concrete support to match the rhetoric of 'indigenisation and empowerment' in the mining sector, which had been paradoxically emerging as an increasing theme in government discourse at the same time that *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* was in full swing (Chinaka 2007; Murombo 2010; Magure 2012). Senior officials in ZANU-PF had pushed forward the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act 14 of 2007, asserting that 'disadvantaged' indigenous Zimbabweans would benefit from re-structured ownership of businesses under a new 'empowerment' agenda,<sup>33</sup> yet small-scale miners widely emphasised that the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act was benefiting an elite group, not communities who were actually profoundly *disempowered* by *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*. One small-scale miner, in a meeting with miners and two government officials, emphasised that the 'idea to empower and indigenise in the mining sector is a good idea' but that the implementation of the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act was 'empowering only the big guys'<sup>34</sup> – meaning the well-connected businessmen.

ADVOCACY STRUGGLES FOLLOWING OPERATION  
CHIKOROKOZA CHAPERERA

While the analysis above provides an overview of key impacts of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, the power to resist – or at least oppose – state repression has been a much-discussed theme with respect to previous state crackdowns in Zimbabwe. As Kamete (2012) points out while analysing *Operation Murambatsvina*, 'a key shortcoming of modernist perspectives is their insistence on power being an exclusive possession of the dominant group (the authorities) which is deployed against the subordinate group' (p. 72). This caution has similar relevance in the context of gold mining conflicts. While some small-scale miners had alliances with powerful politicians, many small-scale miners were left to themselves to figure out a coping strategy. Miners were not passive, however. During the crackdowns, miners' associations began actively voicing protest against these patterns of marginalisation and

criminalisation, taking it upon themselves, in some cases, to educate each other about how they might reclaim equipment that had been stolen by police. Group meetings were held amongst different miners' associations to figure out how – if possible – they could resume work, how they could develop advocacy to create less unfavourable conditions for ASM and how they could be involved in processes of changing mining policies. As a member of the ZMF explained, 'Many of the small-scale miners associations were completely disbanded during *Chikorokoza Chapera* ... but some stayed together and ZMF has had to become stronger, to make our voices heard.'<sup>35</sup>

When theorising the impact of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* on the advocacy processes of artisanal and small-scale miners, it is important to recognise that the sector's diversity meant that different groups had vastly different ways of coping with, or resisting, state policies. The ZMF invited miners and government officials to meetings that were often the scenes of contested and emotional debate. In some cases, ZMF advocacy processes led to small changes – such as a flexible time period for submission of EIA reports and payment of EIA fees. However, miners' advocacy processes were not without controversy. Early in *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*'s implementation, the former President of the ZMF, George Kawonza, told newspapers that 'We support fully the eradication of gold panning in this country but for legally licensed miners to be harassed in this manner is unacceptable' (Makoshori 2007), alluding to the harassment of miners by police forces. Such a statement might suggest that part of the crackdown's ramifications was that miners were publicly turning against each other – ready to concede that the government was right to criminalise (and try to 'eradicate') gold panning (which is more rudimentary, more associated with polluting water resources, and frequently practiced by poorer miners) – while opposing the government's handling of other types of more controllable and mechanised small-scale mining. More importantly, though, another consequence of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* was that it brought some miners together. Small-scale miners held meetings to confront problems emanating from the crackdown, voicing opposition to arrests and explicitly demanding that the government resuscitate support services for the ever-expanding small-scale mining sector. The ZMF issued the following statement in a report to the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development in 2009:

ASM does have the potential to economically empower disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and contribute to national poverty reduction efforts ... On a local level, ASM can provide a means of survival and decent

and productive work for the miners, generate new economic linkages, local investment and stimulate demand for locally produced goods and services and even some various types of basic types of basic social infrastructure. (Zimbabwe Miners Federation 2009: 2)

The ZMF policy paper then continued to draw the case for national policy reform, noting that other 'African regions do have Ministries for ASM or have departments within The Ministry of Mines directly responsible for small scale miners ... Zimbabwe should also take a leaf from them' (Zimbabwe Miners Federation 2009: 6). To help make the case that a new special unit for ASM should be developed within Ministry offices, the following was added:

The Zimbabwean Government has put much emphasis on farming completely ignoring the [small-scale] mining industry. Consequently there are multitudes of problems including abject poverty, lack of mining skills, no access to capital, hazardous working conditions, absence of organization, environmental devastation, non-traceability, illegality, harassment by customary and even state authorities. (Zimbabwe Miners Federation 2009: 5)

The kind of language offered in the above report, although not particularly militant in tone, was not trivial; advocacy from miners helped to pressure state authorities to take a new approach, fuelled by the fact that small-scale miners represented a growing population and an exceedingly important political constituency. The quotation above perhaps slightly misrepresents the level of political interest and engagement – as government officials were often far from 'ignoring' the sector's value. Nonetheless, in a post-crackdown mind-set, particularly as the prospect of future elections loomed, government leaders were well aware that they needed to show a softer approach than had been used in *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*.<sup>36</sup> Although the government did not take up the above recommendation to create a special ASM Ministry or departmental division, a surprising victory for certain ASM advocates was that – for at least a period of nine months in 2009 – a special office was given to the Zimbabwe Miners Federation within the main building of the Ministry of Mines – right next to the Chief Commissioner's mining office in Harare. Communication increased between certain small-scale mining associations and government officials in some ways, due in large part to very active leaders of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation. Their task was complex as a new political space for dialogue was shifting nationally and interviews with them drew repeated attention to dilemmas over 'how far' to take the advocacy.

Following the country's violently disputed presidential election in 2008, a temporary alliance between the two main parties, ZANU-PF and MDC, in 2009, brought a contested degree of hope for renewed focus on livelihood-oriented policymaking in mining and across sectors.<sup>37</sup> A detailed examination of the transition to the Government of National Unity in 2009 is beyond the scope of this study, but there are key notable features of the expanding space for political dialogue inherent in the unity government's composition that had implications for the mining sector. Hammar *et al.* (2010) aptly refer to this historical transition as a shift to a 'marginally reopened political space' (p. 264), where state power relations were only minimally reformed. While the 'unity government' formula was such that ZANU-PF still controlled the presidency as well as many of the most important ministries, including the Ministry of Mines (the notable exception is the Ministry of Finance, which was led by an MDC Minister), the unity government created a situation where deputy minister and minister were from opposing parties and where, according to government rhetoric from both parties, renewed efforts at stakeholder participation in livelihood-oriented policymaking would be championed. In a significant breakthrough for small-scale miners associations, the ZMF hosted a multi-stakeholder workshop in April 2009, where the Minister of Mines (ZANU-PF), his deputy Minister (MDC), the Minister of Environment (ZANU-PF), his deputy Minister (MDC) and other Ministers participated in lively dialogue. Hosted in Harare, the meeting brought small-scale miners into the same room as politicians to voice their concerns, asking questions about injustices in gold sector licensing to issues of environmental management and beyond. Table II shows the range of issues on the meeting agenda (which included the legalisation of riverbed panning, although this was overshadowed by other agenda items relating to small-scale primary ore mining). As one interviewee remarked (immediately before the meeting), 'This is the first meeting like this in many years . . . the government never used to allow a meeting like this.'<sup>38</sup> What is particularly noteworthy about the meeting agenda (Table II) is its highlighting of the multiple faces of state power that profoundly affected the lives and livelihoods of artisanal and small-scale miners – calling into question the practices of police units, environment authorities, mining licence regulators, the Reserve Bank and other arms of the state.

The meeting showcased only selected constituents. Some of the previous leaders of the ZMF were no longer on the executive council – as they had campaigned for MDC positions in the 2008 elections and were removed from the federation for being too political. Nonetheless, the

TABLE II

## Agenda for multi-stakeholder meeting on small-scale mining

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**Meeting Agenda – ZMF Small/Medium Scale Mining Conference: Issues and Concerns Stakeholder Meeting on Small-Scale Mining, Cresta Jameson Hotel, 15 May 2009**


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- Mining mechanisation and funding
  - Gold bullion funding
  - Gold Export Permit for ZMF
  - Indiscriminate arrests of miners trading in gold against the Monetary Policy Statement on gold producers
  - The inconclusive Miners and Minerals Amendment Bill into Act
  - Granting of EPOs (Exclusive Prospective Orders) taking time to sign and the uplifting of reserved areas
  - EMA (Environmental Management Agency) charges which are quite inhibitive
  - Ban on the exportation of raw chrome
  - Great Dyke Monopoly by ZIMASCO, ZIMALLOYS, ZIMPLATS and UNKI (taking 95% of the mineralised area)
  - Diamond mining by small/medium scale miners.
  - The regularisation of riverbed panners
  - The decline of mineral production
  - The potential of the small/medium scale miners of the turnaround of the economy
- 

meeting brought participants together to discuss an array of contentious issues. The meeting highlighted how a shifting political space for public dialogue was generating new hopes and new ambiguities about the future for small-scale mining. The speeches showcased a range of institutional challenges and the need for trust-building following *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*.

In a mocking tone, the Minister of Mines, Minister Obert Mpofo, alluded to how ‘small-scale miners never seem to get along’ and how – in a turn of phrase likely few people in the audience took as authentic, ‘small-scale miners should be more like me and my Deputy Minister, from MDC ... we are from different political parties but we work together well ... you small-scale miners need to stop fighting.’<sup>39</sup> It was clear, however, that this statement was not read by audience members as genuine or convincing for at least a couple of reasons.<sup>40</sup> First, opposition members were clearly not happy that they had been forced into a unity government with ZANU-PF, after having thought that MDC won the election; the relation between the leaders of the two parties, in particular, was profoundly tense. Secondly, the statement also was read as ironic in that the main problem in the small-scale mining sector was clearly *not* conflict between small-scale miners; rather, conflict between miners and government institutions (including police, mining authorities and environment authorities) was a far greater concern of the small-scale miners present at the meeting. Nonetheless, if a new and

expanded political space for dialogue was indeed emerging, the presence of ministers at the meeting and their answers to miners' questions were at least regarded as a welcome step. At other moments in the meeting, the Minister was confronted with questions about the bureaucratic and costly EIA process, the lack of funding for education of miners, the need for technology assistance, the indiscriminate arrests of miners and the need to 'un-freeze' prospecting licences that the government had been holding in limbo.<sup>41</sup>

Control over mineral resource access was again fiercely debated on 14 February 2013, when a new association, the Zimbabwe Artisanal and Small-Scale for Sustainable Mining Council, held a national stakeholder meeting to discuss the continued impacts of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* and advocacies for reform. Two particular features underscored how memories of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* were shaping ongoing debate. First, *discourse* and the *politics of representation* were central themes of dispute. As emphasised by one representative from the Association of Women in Rural Mining in Zimbabwe at the meeting, the term '*makakorokoza*' – for 'illegal miner' – was derogatory and should no longer be used by the government. The discourse of 'irresponsible' miners was also contested in her speech as were the particularly negative effects that *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* had on women in mining communities.<sup>42</sup> Notably, Murungu *et al.* (2012) provide a detailed discussion of how the government's mining licensing efforts have marginalised women artisanal miners, with results of their survey suggesting that almost 50% of women in ASM communities had experienced being arrested by police in recent years. This provides a sharp contrast to the artisanal mining situation described in Ghana recently in this journal, where Hilson *et al.* (2013) argue that 'numerous families have taken advantage of a low regulatory and police presence to undertake unlicensed small-scale gold mining and processing alongside their farming activities' (p. 122). A second key feature of the new association's meeting was that a sense of solidarity was also being shaped and adapted. Artisanal and small-scale miners present at the meeting spoke out against repressive measures as well as the dominance of large-scale mining.<sup>43</sup> There were, however, social divisions among miners' organisations that had yet to be repaired, with diverse artisanal and small-scale miners' interests at stake. Unlike meetings in 2006 that had a strong presence of riverbed panners from the Zimbabwe Panners Association, the absence of riverbed panners at the February 2013 meeting indicated that panners were locked in a different kind of criminalised state and that the language of decriminalisation was less amenable to riverbed

panning. Nonetheless, miners were making the case that *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* should never be repeated and a new era of ASM support was urgently needed.

#### CONCLUSION

Academic discourses on illegal mining in Africa often emphasise the need for policing and tight enforcement of environmental policies. How a government actually goes about ‘formalising’ the gold mining economy is, however, intensely disputed. This article has examined how the conceptualisation of a police crackdown in Zimbabwe – allegedly a state initiative to formalise the mineral economy – requires careful attention both to immediate physical violence as well as long-term impacts on livelihoods. During the course of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*, tens of thousands of small-scale miners across the country were arrested, and miners encountered varied faces of violent and at times seemingly ‘arbitrary’ state power. Police stole miners’ equipment, destroyed dwellings and inflicted other forms of physical violence. In addition, there was structural violence associated with income deprivation, with rural economic coping strategies virtually shut down in regional cases where police were heavily active such as Insiza District. Far from the kind of ‘weak state’ apparatus described in much of the broader (often West African-focused) literature on artisanal mining, the analysis of this study underscores a complex inter-relationship between different arms of a powerful state and diverse artisanal miners who were affected by *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*.

Although some people profited from the illegal gold trade in conjunction with police corruption, the country’s national budget was left poorer as a result of expensive police work and less gold being collected by government gold-buying offices. Amid hyperinflation and ever-increasing technocratic hurdles such as costly licensing requirements, it was impossible for many artisanal miners to operate within the law. Kamete (2012) described how the violence of *Operation Murambatsvina* was made possible by technocratic ‘planning’ discourse that obscured the politics and consequences of coercive state policy. Similar technocratic discourses masked *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*’s political and economic drivers. Moreover, just as *Operation Murambatsvina* resulted in multiple forms of displacement and marginalisation, *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* produced multiple forms of displacement, not only driving ASM miners to resort to more rudimentary and clandestine forms of precarious mining in some cases, but also forcing some



Zimbabwean gold miners to re-locate as far away as the Chimanimani mountains in Mozambique. All the while, discourses of ‘order’ were used by senior government officials for diverse purposes, ultimately extending a long-standing pattern of what Hammar (2005) previously termed the ‘growing normalisation of violence as a technology of rule’ (Hammar 2005: 3).

To conclude, while policing actions that emanated from *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* deepened frustration with state repression and fuelled distrust between miners and regulatory officials, the crackdown also needs to be understood in terms of the agency of marginalised segments of mining populations. As state discourses of mining sector regulation continue to be debated, the present study has provided a glimpse into how artisanal and small-scale miners have been seeking to regain a footing in the aftermath of violent crackdowns. It is important to stress the heterogeneity of the ASM sector in Zimbabwe, as some – but certainly not all – small-scale mining associations have been working, or able to work, in tandem with politically powerful actors. While ‘state-induced displacements are not aberrations, but rather an ever-present possibility’ (Hammar 2008: 417), *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*’s legacy may ultimately be both the normalisation and contestation of mutating forms of repression via mining sector criminalisation.

Three days before the 2013 presidential elections, ZANU-PF officials made public statements pledging to support and empower ASM communities, fully cognisant of their political importance as a voting constituency (Chingono 2013). In light of this populist rhetoric, it is all the more important to understand the legacies of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera*. While certain constituencies within the ASM sector have managed to recover, artisanal gold panning remains criminalised and those small-scale primary ore miners who are less politically connected continue to face a future of marginalisation. As artisanal mining continues to be an important livelihood strategy in Zimbabwe’s ever-lasting economic and political crisis, more attention needs to be given to hidden dimensions of marginalisation and neglected voices in Zimbabwe’s dynamic gold mining communities.

#### NOTES

1. Due to hyperinflation, at certain points in 2006 and 2007 the government’s official gold price was the equivalent of one-thirtieth of the international price when calculated at US dollar values (Spiegel 2009).

2. The government’s requirement that all artisanal and small-scale miners submit environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports was interpreted in several ways by my interviewees. For some people, completing EIA reports (which required paying an environmental consultant upwards of US\$3,000)

were regarded as an important step at identifying risks in the mining area—and several ecological risks associated with gold extraction are discussed by Tunhuma *et al.* (2007). However, as pointed out by Chimhowu *et al.* (2010), the EIA system in Zimbabwe was marred by political cronyism, with government officials often receiving money to complete EIA reports and additional fees for authorising the EIAs in government offices. In my interviews with artisanal and small-scale miners, a common theme was that miners could not afford to contract consultants to complete the EIAs, and even where they could afford to do so, the reports had little impact on the actual environmental risk management strategies taken in the gold extraction process.

3. Interview, senior official, Ministry of Mining and Mining Development, Harare, 22.4.2009.
4. Interview, former artisanal riverbed gold panner (current part-time plumber), Filabusi, Insiza District, 25.4.2009.
5. Interview, former artisanal riverbed gold panner (current part-time plumber), Filabusi, Insiza District, 25.4.2009.
6. Famine Early Warning Systems Network (2011). See also Constellation Consulting Group (2008).
7. Interview, gold panner, Filabusi, Insiza District, 5.5.2009.
8. One example was my interview with a ZANU-PF Council Member in the Insiza Rural District Council, Filabusi, 24.4.2009.
9. Small-scale gold miner—tunnel digger and ore processing worker, Filabusi, Insiza, 9.12.2012.
10. My interview findings here resonate with an analysis provided by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, which briefly described Operation *Chikorokoza Chapera*, noting that ‘the government destroyed the homes of thousands of informal miners, in many cases forcing the men to destroy their own homes while forcing the women to watch and sing songs of praise for the government’ (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2011).
11. In 2007, a police officer who escorted me around some of the mines took me to the police station in Filabusi, where the numbers of arrests had been escalating. The increase in criminal activities as a result of Operation *Chikorokoza Chapera* was also noted by members of the ZMF whom I interviewed in 2009, 2012 and 2013.
12. Interview, Council Member in the Insiza Rural District Council, Filabusi, 24.4.2009.
13. Mhiripiri (2013) discusses the example of a musician in Kwekwe, Tongai Moyo, who ‘lost a lot of revenue during this period because his support base of makorokoza was dispersed’ (p. 22).
14. Interview, small-scale gold miner (former riverbed panner), Filabusi, Insiza District, 25.4.2009.
15. Interview, government geologist, Ministry of Mines, Harare, 13.5.2009.
16. Legal documentation can be seen at: [http://www.zimllii.org/files/zw/judgment/%5Btermalias-raw%5D/2010/33/10\\_hb\\_033\\_1\\_pdf\\_13177.pdf](http://www.zimllii.org/files/zw/judgment/%5Btermalias-raw%5D/2010/33/10_hb_033_1_pdf_13177.pdf).
17. Interview, Chief Mining Commissioner, Ministry of Mines and Mining Development, Harare, 12.5.2009.
18. The system of tributing in Zimbabwe involves a formal agreement between the mining license holder and the party or parties conducting the mining.
19. Interview, gold mill owner, 7.12.2012, Umzingwani.
20. Interview, Manica District, Mozambique, 14.9.2009.
21. Ndunguru *et al.* (2006) and Dondeyne *et al.* (2009) document how police crackdowns on the Mozambique side of the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border caused more problems than they solved, made environmental degradation and pollution worse and led to human rights abuses. There is widespread consensus amongst scholars that human rights problems have been more widespread and severe on the Zimbabwe side of the border, particularly as far greater numbers of people were arrested in Zimbabwe and more violent police tactics were utilised.
22. Interview, senior official, Ministry of Mining, Harare, 22.4.2009.
23. ‘Zimbabwe holds 16,000 over mining’, 28.12.2006. BBC news. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6214431.stm> (accessed 2.8.2013).
24. Interview, small-scale gold miner, Harare, 22.4.2009.
25. Group discussion with members of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation, Harare, 22.4.2009.
26. Interview, former prison guard and current prospective small-scale gold miner, Shamva, 10.12.2012.
27. ‘5 years in prison for possessing half a gramme of gold worth \$24: Gokwe magistrate,’ 22.6.2013. <http://67.225.218.85/news/5730-5-years-in-prison-for-possessing-half-a-gramme-of-gold-worth-24-gokwe-magistrate.html> (accessed 13.12.2013). Notably, in parliamentary records, ZANU-PF politicians are quoted as emphasising the need for increasing automatic jail sentences to an

automatic 5-year penalty for illegal mining and illegal trade in gold and diamonds, despite vocal opposition from an MDC politician, David Coltart (now an MDC Senator), who was a lone dissenting voice at one of the meetings (Hansard, 2007).

28. Interview with two small-scale gold miners, Insiza, 9.12.2012.
29. Interview, small-scale gold miner, Insiza, 9.12.2012.
30. Telephone interview, small-scale miner, 12.7.2010.
31. Interview, Umzingwane Rural District Council Member, Esigodini, 7.12.2012.
32. Interview, former artisanal riverbed gold panner (current part-time plumber), Filabusi, Insiza District, 25.4.2009.
33. Officially, the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act 14 of 2007 required businesses in Zimbabwe having a net asset value of over the prescribed threshold to have a controlling interest of not less than 51% held by indigenous Zimbabweans. This spanned multiple sectors including mining.
34. Interview, small-scale miner, 12.5.2009, Harare.
35. Interview, member of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation, Insiza, 9.12.2012.
36. Analysts have noted that ZANU-PF started to shore up its political base by awarding mining licenses to potential supporters before the 2013 election campaign, as part of wider discussion on election strategy (Raftopolous 2013). Legacies of *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* can thus be understood within the context of shifting strategies of power-brokering and dynamic networks of patronage.
37. Raftopolous (2010) provides an in-depth account of the political compromises made in establishing the 'Government of National Unity,' detailing how the unity government created some hope while also having the effect of silencing dissent on certain forms of violence. See also Kriger (2012).
38. Interview, small-scale gold miner, Cresta Jameson Hotel, Harare, 15.5.2009.
39. Participant observation, multi-stakeholder meeting on small-scale mining issues, Cresta Jameson Hotel, Harare, 15.5.2009.
40. Participant observation, multi-stakeholder meeting on small-scale mining issues, Cresta Jameson Hotel, Harare, 15.5.2009.
41. Participant observation, multi-stakeholder meeting on small-scale mining issues, Cresta Jameson Hotel, Harare, 15.5.2009.
42. Participant observation, Harare, 14.2.2013.
43. Small-scale miners at the meeting criticised policies that have given a monopoly on mining licenses in the Great Dyke to large companies such as ZIMASCO, ZIMALLOYS and ZIMPLATS. Small-scale miners argued that such policies have led to speculation activities and perpetuated the illegality of small-scale mining.

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