

GLOBAL **ADVOCACY TEAM**



INTERNATIONAL
ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

OUR VOICES, COMMUNITY CHOICES AMAZON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN



This community-led development plan is part of a groundbreaking series created by the Insiza Women in Mining Trust and people of Amazon community in Zimbabwe in partnership with the Global Advocacy Team initiative, convened by the International Accountability Project.

This initiative unites inspiring community organizers from around the world to conduct community-led research, engaging 945 people across 7 countries. Through co-designed and shared learning, this three-year journey has resulted in a series of transformative community-led development plans focused on locally rooted, globally connected solutions.

Explore other community-led development plans to see the full range of powerful, community-driven solutions.

Learn more here: <https://accountabilityproject.org/work/global-advocacy-team/communities-leading-the-way-inspiring-community-led-development-plans/>

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Our History, Cultures, and Identities

The Amazon community has an estimated population of 62,124 men and 60,700 women. This includes Ward 10 where the research was carried out, which has an estimated 1,133 men and 1,055 women. Since 1988, the community has primarily focused on cattle ranching and goat rearing.

In 2002, the first miner registered in the community and started mining. Most of the mines that followed were registered in 2016, when more of the community started to engage in mining activities. Climate change, which has affected the rain patterns and caused economic hardships, contributed to this community shift to mining.

Mining activities increased, and the situation in the Amazon community worsened, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions were imposed on people's movements. And people from the community were not able to go to work, but they needed food and other basic necessities. Villagers increasingly become miners, and mining activities become the main source of livelihood for the community. Also, schools were closed as part of the measures taken by the government to stop the spread of the virus, but this led to an increase in child labor. Currently, the community has both legal and unregistered miners, and child labour continues in some communities.



Mining activities have led to environmental degradation and changed the landscape of the Amazon community. The river that serves as the water source for people and livestock in the community is also used for mining activities. The registered miners also use timber for securing the walls within their mine shafts, which has led to deforestation because they cut trees without replacing them. There is room for reforestation, however, as most miners are planting fruit trees such as avocado and mango trees. They are also using disused pits for fish farming projects.



What Do We Mean by Development?

Our Right to Development

Development means a process in which the Amazon people come together to take action on what's important to them as a community. At its heart, community development is rooted in the belief that all people should have access to health, well-being, wealth, justice, and opportunities. This type of development requires the following changes:

- Improved jobs and income
- Better access to basic social services
- Better public transportation services
- Better access to clean water
- Better health and access to healthcare
- Improved sanitation
- Respect, protect and promote of human rights
- Reduce inequality between the rich and the poor

Our Community Principles of Practice

Our community is marginalized, as it is comprised of women and youth. We embrace the following principles:

- Transparency
- Honesty
- Sustainability
- Self-reliance
- Cooperation
- Gender inclusivity

Our Community's Development Priorities

Key Challenges We Face and Prioritized Issues That Need To Be Addressed

The need to address environmental degradation in the Amazon community is a key issue. The waste products of mining, called mine-spoils, are left in their place by the unregistered miners when they move to the next working area. This, among other things, causes serious environmental contamination, when the waste products enter waterways and the groundwater, polluting water resources. The environmental degradation is further characterized by erosion of exposed soils, and water contamination from the sediment from extracted mineral ores, tailings, and fine material in waste rock piles that enters surface waters and drainage ways. In addition, spills and leaks of hazardous materials and deposits of contaminated windblown dust are leading to soil contamination.



Women villagers are discussing their development priorities during a training on artisanal mining (Photo by Insiza Women in Mining Trust)

We also seek to address the public health issues associated with mining. Health issues arise from the incorrect use of mine chemicals such as mercury, cyanide, caustic soda, lime, peroxide, and acids, which impact women's health and reproductive systems. Other health issues arise from early child marriages, leading to early pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted diseases among both the community and the miners. Drug abuse is also a pervasive problem in mining communities, exacerbating these issues, as it also contributes to sexually transmitted diseases, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, family disintegration and child neglect, depression and anxiety, increased crime and social unrest, and decreased productivity among miners.

The challenges we face in securing support for our plan are mainly from the political climate. When Zimbabwe is in an election period, the government suspects that gatherings are of opposition parties. Other challenges that we often face during election periods include voter intimidation, lack of transparency, accusations of election fraud, and violence. These issues can create tension and hinder the democratic process.

When it comes to implementing our community-led development plan, our priorities include ensuring community engagement and participation, securing necessary resources, addressing infrastructure needs, promoting sustainability, and monitoring progress effectively. It is essential to have strong leadership, clear communication, and accountability mechanisms in place to successfully implement a community-led development plan.



Our Development Vision

Our vision is to curb land degradation and deforestation in Filabusi, Zimbabwe by encouraging responsible mining and planting trees. We seek to ensure that miners mine responsibly and work well with the community to implement our development plan. Responsible mining requires that miners use safe mining methods, properly handle mine chemicals on site, and backfill the pits that were excavated during exploration. This development vision will likely involve a multi-faceted approach.

1

Reforestation Efforts: We will implement large-scale, tree-planting initiatives to replace trees that have been cut down for mining activities or other causes of deforestation. This can help restore biodiversity, prevent soil erosion, and improve local microclimates. We have recently begun planting avocado trees and have also identified indigenous trees to plant in the future.

2

Backfilling Projects: We will encourage backfilling techniques to restore land that has been disturbed by mining activities. This involves filling in open pits and recontouring the land to its natural state, which can help prevent land degradation and promote sustainable land use. We have already started engaging the mining community, including both the miners and community-based monitors from the broader community.

3

Community Involvement: We will engage the Amazon community in tree planting and backfilling activities to ensure ownership and sustainability of the project. This also provides economic opportunities for community members through employment and skills development.

4

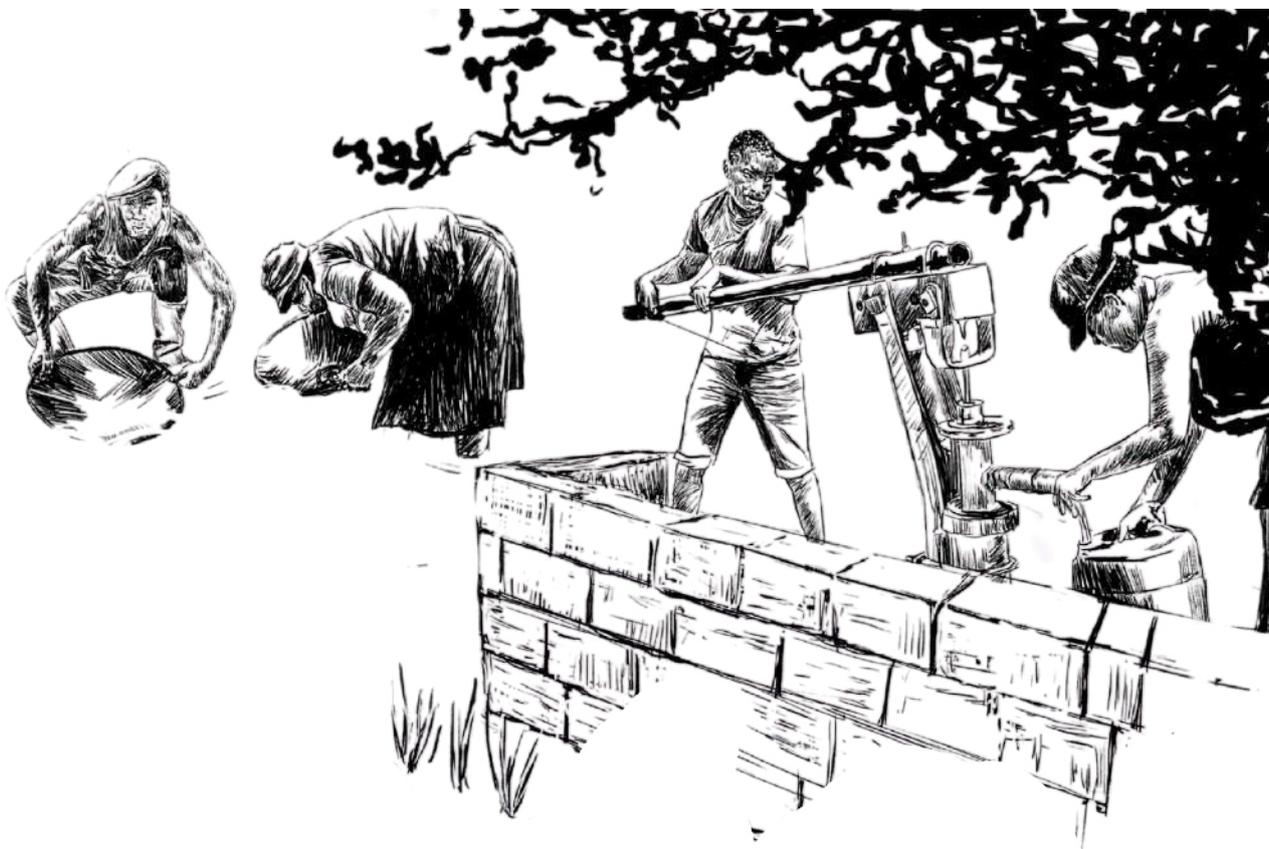
Educational Campaigns: We will conduct awareness campaigns to educate community members about the importance of conserving forests, preventing land degradation, and promoting sustainable practices. Empowering locals with knowledge can lead to long-term behavior change and conservation efforts. We have now started working on educational pamphlets.



By combining these elements into a comprehensive development vision, the mining community of Filabusi, Zimbabwe, can work towards sustainable land management practices that enhance environmental resilience and benefit both present and future generations.

Some of the resources we will need include: people to do outreach; funding to pay for soil testing, the equipment needed for backfilling, tree saplings and other supplies. We will also need funding and training to improve government oversight of mining in the area, among other needs.

We need to change the miners' mindset. Miners need to be responsible in their mining activities and take care of the environment. They also need to formalise their operations, a process that involves the government environmental agencies, which can help to curb land degradation. The community can work closely with the relevant government agencies to monitor miners and mining activities.



Participation of the Community in Designing and Implementing the Development Plan

Our Roles and Participation in Creating Our Community-led Development Plan

- » The community will take part in selecting the members who will do the actual planning, and the planning team will include an equal number of representatives from each of the different groups within the community, including men, women, youth and people with disabilities.
- » The role of the Insiza Women in Mining Trust will be to make sure project information is available and accessible to the community.
- » The documents relating to the community-led development plan are in the Ndebele language.
- » All potential negative impacts of the plan are well articulated and explained.

Process of Consultation and Providing Continuous Consent in Our Community

We will engage in a continuous process of consultation within the stakeholders and the community so as to ensure alignment with the community's needs. This continuous process will be conducted by community monitors, who will observe the tree planting activities during the planting period, as well as oversee the plan as a whole as it is implemented.

What We Are Asking

1

We call on Village Head to:

- Approve the community-led development plan;
- Assist in convening the necessary meetings; and
- Encourage the community to participate in the community-led development activities, such as planting trees and monitoring.

2

We call on the Mining Associations to:

- Gather miners to attend meetings to discuss issues and solutions; and
- Influence the miners to participate in capacity-building training organized for implementation of the community-led development plan.

3

We call on the District Development Officer to:

- Endorse the community-led development plan;
- Review the district budget related to development planning and recommend assistance from the government;
- Advise parliament on the national development agenda; and
- Keep apprised of the community-led development plan in conjunction with local government authorities and with the aid of community monitors.

4

We call on Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality to:

- Advocate for, formulate and implement policies to address environmental issues, such as land degradation and deforestation;
- Introduce regulations that assist in controlling and minimizing environmental problems, such as land degradation and deforestation; and
- Promote environmentally sustainable practices and education to protect natural resources in line with the National Resource Act of Zimbabwe, section 73 of the Constitution, and Goal Number 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Co-Designed Solutions for and by the
Amazon Community, Zimbabwe

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