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The BULLETIN

with 

ISSUE
NO. 36

More Local. More Inclusive. More Interactive

A WAR THAT NEVER ENDS:

INSIDE GWANDA'S PERENIAL WATER WOES

BY MELODY MPANDE

Page

6



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ISSUE NO: 36 | 24 JULY 2022



“ My first deployment was at a satellite school in the Sidinda area. I actually spent the whole term staying in a classroom storeroom. (11)

Geoffrey Ncube, a teacher at one of the satellite schools in Hwange

”



“ If they could even give us at least US\$50 a month as compared to the RTGS200 we have been receiving as Ecocash we would be better off. (26)

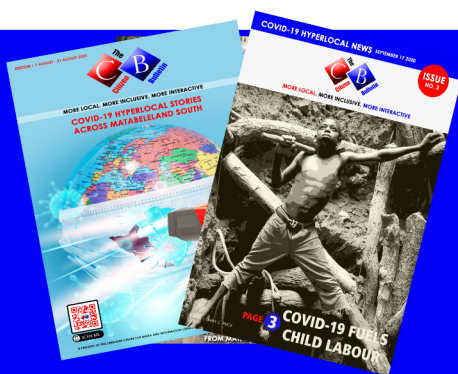
Regina Ngwenya, a Kamandama mine widow

”

Inside:

Page 2

- EDITORIAL: Keeping Local News Alive in Times of Crises - Page 3
- COVID-19 IN NUMBERS - Page 5
- COVER STORY: A War that Never Ends: Inside Gwanda's Perennial Water Woes - Page 6
- Porous Borders a Haven for Wildlife Poachers - Page 8
- Teachers Shun Local Schools Due to Housing Shortages - Page 11
- THE DRIFT: - Page 13
- Prostitution and Fast Cash: The Bitter-Sweet Menace of Truckers - Page 15
- Wild Animals Compete with Humans for Scarce Water - Page 17
- Villagers Bear Brunt of Human-wildlife Conflict - Page 19
- GUEST COMMENTARY: Why are Local Arts Ventures Failing? - Page 21
- Villagers Walk Over 26 Km to Reach Local Clinic - Page 23
- FROM THE WEB: Page 25
- SPECIAL REPORT: Kamandama Mine Widows Forgotten and Neglected - Page 26



BECOME A MEMBER

Our well-rounded reporting is hyperlocal, inclusive, and human-centred and helps our audiences from the greater region of Matabeleland expand understanding of their deep-rooted challenges so that they are able to navigate them. You can be part of our mission-driven journalism by joining our nascent membership program. To join our membership, you must first become a subscriber by sending 'join' to +263718636459 via WhatsApp.



Keeping Local News Alive in Times of Crises

Through trying times, **The Citizen Bulletin** has kept its important work alive, in service to underserved communities who need news and information to make informed decisions about their lives and communities.

by Divine Dube, CEO & PUBLISHER | @The_CBNews

L month [we](#) took a voluntary sabbatical from publishing our weekly e-paper, The Bulletin. We've been doing this since 2021 to dedicate more time towards our fundraising efforts to keep our important work alive. And now we're back!

But why are we persistent in our pursuit to keep local news alive?

The Citizen Bulletin is a unique news organization. Nearly all our stories are longform features that center ordinary citizens. For many local newsrooms this is a once-off beat. And we also have a clear mission: We seek through our unique journalism to spur real-community change, and we judge our own success by how often and to what extent we achieve this objective.

But here is an irony: while we're good at telling stories about others, we rarely tell ours with the same vigor and zest we exhibit in our reporting. While we're proud of the work we do, rarely do we write about how daring this mission is. In Zimbabwe, while local journalism is increasingly becoming important more than before, the support it has is dwindling each day.

And these are unusual times. While journalism in many parts of the world is battling [debilitating financial pressures](#), in Zimbabwe, things are even worse: inflation is skyrocketing and local populations, from whom we must get the much needed support we desperately need, survive

on less than a dollar per day, and can hardly afford to buy a packet of paracetamol tablets when they fall ill.

And [COVID-19 made it even worse](#): A once-in-a-century pandemic and a once-in-a-century economic collapse all played out at the same time before our eyes. Yet here we are, trying to keep local journalism, one of the most battered sectors in the country, alive, during these trying times.

Sometimes our reporters and editors go for months without pay. Sometimes they travel to get the essential story, risking their lives, on empty tummies. Yet, through it all, they've sought credible news to keep our communities informed at a time when news as a public good is losing relevance each day.

Through it all, [The Citizen Bulletin](#) has been the most credible source and resource for the greater region of Matabeleland, providing relevant, reliable reporting on some of the most undercovered beats including [public health](#), [climate change](#) and [education](#).



Education is among the most undercovered beats in Matabeleland. Image by Unsplash

That's what we launched in 2017 to do. And that's what we're still doing today—only with more drive, ambition and motivation. And that's why we are back today with another well-rounded publication, Issue 36.

If you're reading this e-paper, you built this. You make all this possible—whether you count yourself among readers who affirmed the power of our mission in the last half of the year; attend our events, either in person or online; amplify and vouch for our work on various platforms; or avail yourselves to our reporters whenever they need comments on stories they are doing; please know you're in our thoughts at all times. We would not—and could not have done it without you, and going forward we won't — and can't — do it without you. We are so honored to do this work. - [@village_scribe](#) ■

COVID-19 IN NUMBERS

Cumulative cases, deaths and recoveries from COVID-19 since March 2020

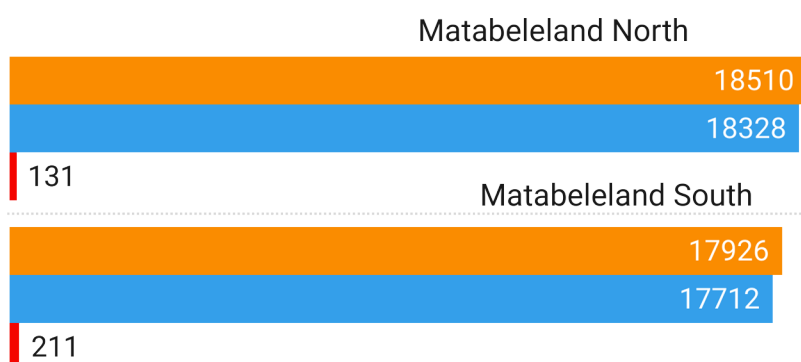
LOCAL

COVID-19 in Matabeleland

North and South Provinces

Total number of cases, recoveries and deaths from COVID-19

Cases Recoveries Deaths



REGIONAL

COVID-19 in Matabeleland

36,436

Total number who have tested positive for COVID-19

+1,351 cases since last BULLETIN

36,040

Total number who have recovered from COVID-19

+1,919 recoveries since last BULLETIN

342

Total number who have died from COVID-19

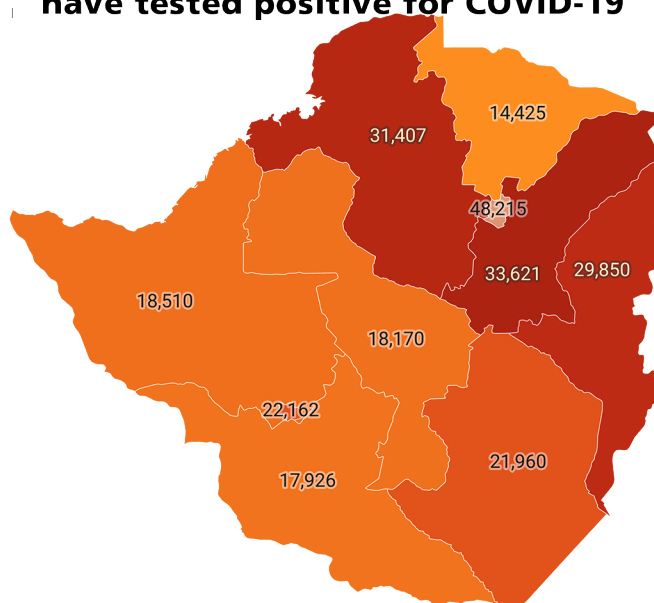
+8 deaths since last BULLETIN

NATIONAL

COVID-19 in Zimbabwe

Cases by region

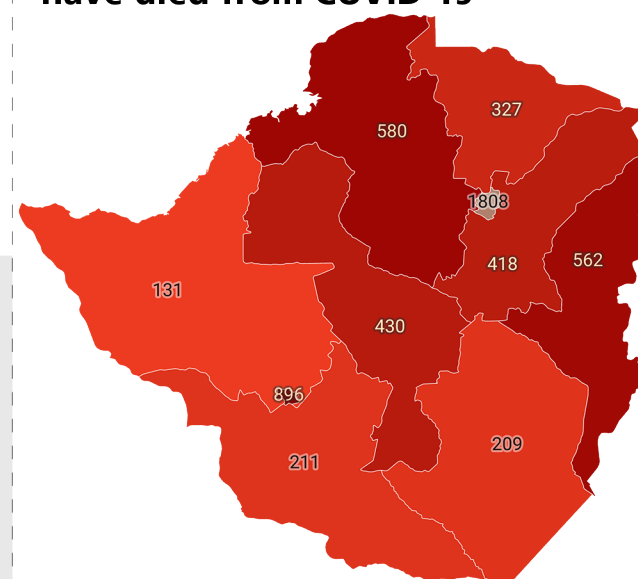
Total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19



14,425 48,215

Deaths by region

Total number of people who have died from COVID-19



131 1,808

Source: The Ministry of Health and Child Care daily COVID-19 Report

Note: Data as at 22 July 2022

A War that Never Ends: Inside Gwanda's Perennial Water Woes

Although water management in Gwanda town is no longer under the Zimbabwe National Water Authority, with the municipality now at the helm, residents still battle with debilitating water woes. But who is to blame?

by Melody Mpande | @The_CBNews

Access to water is a basic human right as enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe and other corresponding International statutes such as the United Nations' [Resolution A/RES/64/292](#) on [Human right to water](#).

But Sibongile Bhebhe, a Gwanda resident, says she is not enjoying that right as water in the town is hardly available — and whenever it is, it would be contaminated.

Bhebhe bears the brunt of the worsened water crisis as she has to travel several miles in search of the precious liquid for household consumption.

“

Mere access to water is not enough. If the water is not clean, it is not safe to drink.”

Sibongile Bhebhe, as she attempts to fetch half a bucket of mud-infested water from Mtshabezi River

”

In Gwanda, [access to water](#) is a war that never ends.

In 2006, the central government directed all local authorities to hand over water management functions to the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), a decision that was later reversed following residents' protests.

But ZINWA continued controlling the water supply and sewer infrastructure for local authorities such as Gwanda and Beitbridge.

For over a decade, Gwanda residents blamed the water management body for [the town's water woes](#) as the latter continued to ignore the government directive.

Gwanda residents went as far as petitioning the Parliament as well as going to court to force ZINWA to hand over water management to their Council.

But, it was only recently that ZINWA gave in to the demands, and handed over the Gwanda water treatment plant to the local authority in line with a recent central government

directive which set April 1, 2022 as the deadline.

But water shortages persist, with residents saying the situation has worsened as they now go for days without the precious liquid.

When residents lobbied for the handover of the water treatment plant, they thought water shortages would be a thing of the past, but the new boss—the local Council—is proving them wrong, says Bhebehe.

“Water would go reasonably in times of ZINWA’s control of the water plant. These days we are deprived of water almost every day. It only comes for just 2 hours,” Bhebehe says.



Without clean water coming out from their taps, residents are then forced to seek unsafe water putting their health at risk.

Image by Unsplash

Residents now feel the situation was better under ZINWA and argue that the local authority has no capacity to address the perennial water challenges bedeviling the Matabeleland South provincial capital.

“The Council is as clueless and useless as ZINWA,” fumes Anna Phiri, another resident. “We really thought we had solved the problem and little did we know that we are creating even a bigger one.”

Phiri says the unresolved water crisis forces residents to seek alternative water sources, often unsafe, putting their health at risk of water borne diseases such as diarrhoea.

“Water has become so scarce. When it happens that it runs in the tap, it comes out smelling and dirty and obviously unsafe for drinking and cooking purposes,” she says.

Wellington Nare, a representative of Gwanda Residents Association (GRA) weighs in saying residents are suffering, and spend most of their time searching for the precious liquid.

“As residents we believe the Council has the obligation to provide water and other basic services as per the National Water Policy and the Constitution,” says Nare. But he says maybe it is too early to blame the Council.

“Stakeholders held a meeting recently, of which the Council is still understudying the plant and its systems in partnership with ZINWA, meaning the process is still at its earliest stages,” says Nare.

Gwanda mayor Njabulo Siziba says water woes will continue haunting residents for months to come as there was a need for the rehabilitation of water treatment plants.

“A lot needs to be done, and we urge the public to be patient as everything will fall into place soon,” says Siziba.

“We announced on Tuesday (Jul. 12) that a lift pump at the plant had broken down and was taken to Bulawayo for repairs plunging the mining town into a water crisis.”

While residents are fuming, Siziba says the mining town must celebrate having control of its water systems.

“It was long overdue, we have long hoped to have taken charge of the water systems in Gwanda by April 18, which is also Zimbabwe’s Independence Day,” says Siziba. ■



Porous Borders a Haven for Wildlife Poachers

Poaching crimes continue unabated as poachers take advantage of lapse security personnel to stalk endangered animals in Hwange National Park. Villagers believe that unless they are included in anti-poaching committees, efforts to curb the scourge will not yield any positive results.

by Calvin Manika | [@The_CBNews](#)

Patrick Moyo, a former community wildlife ranger in Matetsi village, ward 1, narrates how poaching syndicates took advantage of porous borders to commit their crime.

“...for example, in Pandamatenga there is a police post with cops and immigration officials, but patrols are limited,” Moyo says.

“Some groups from Hwange national park and the Zambezi national park take turns to patrol but it’s a vast area.”

“Unlike populated areas, poachers easily use these routes to come into Zimbabwe, or they just poach in those areas and go.”

Pandamatenga borders Zimbabwe and Botswana, and stretches all the way to the Zambian border covering vast tracts of land where there are game parks such as the Hwange national park.

Cross border crimes, including wildlife poaching, are rampant.

Villagers in Matetsi, one of the wildlife sanctuaries in Hwange, Matabeleland North, say there is a need for authorities to roll out

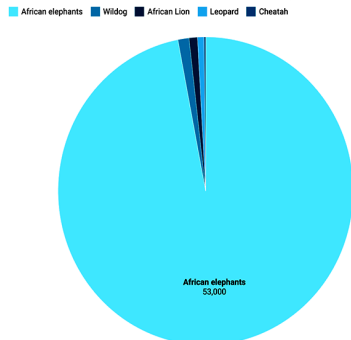
security interventions to fight poaching.

“From what we hear and see in Gonarezhou, it seems a lot is happening towards the protection of biodiversity,” says Melusi Ncube, a villager.

“It is our desire as a community to see the government lobbying for the same in Matabeleland North. I feel it is an intervention which reduces human-wildlife conflict while focusing on investment of natural resources.”

According to the 2018 Game Census for Hwange National Park and surrounding areas carried by Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe Matabeleland Branch, the population count of the endangered animals in the park was carried out on leopards, cheetahs, African Lion, wild dogs and African elephants. The black and white rhinoceros were part of the mammals which were not counted in the census.

Population of endangered animals in Hwange National Park



According to the 2018 Game Census for Hwange National Park and surrounding areas, leopards, cheetahs, African lions, African elephant and wild dogs constitute some of the endangered animals in the park.

In 2002, the Presidents of Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe signed the international Treaty for the establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTCA) to eliminate cross-border poaching.

A transfrontier conservation area (TFCA) refers to a cross-border region whose different component areas have different forms of conservation status such as national parks, private game reserves, communal

natural resource management areas and even hunting concession areas.

Conservationists say TFCAs provide a platform for the future development and implementation of the second-phase Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA), which includes an even wider variety of land uses.

According to the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA), the GLTFCA is an extensive area of essentially flat savannah bisected North-South by the Lebombo mountain range.

It is home to three biomes, grasslands, forest and savannah.

This area is constituted of owl and savannah ecosystem landscapes including lowland plains savannah in the larger part of the area, hilly granite plateau in the western portions, and the Lebombo Mountains.

There are five major vegetation types in the GLTFCA, including mopane woodlands and shrubveld, mixed bushveld, sandveld in the south-east of Mozambique, riverine woodlands in the Kruger and Gonarezhou National Parks, and seasonally flooded dry grasslands in Banhine National Park.

Findings by *The Citizen Bulletin* reveal that there is abundance of wildlife in the GLTP

with a total of 147 species of mammal, 116 reptile species, 49 species of fish, 34 species of frogs, 500 or more bird species, in addition to at least 2,000 species of plants.

On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the GLFTA, ministers of Environment from South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe met virtually on April 13, this year to discuss various issues related to the collaborative management of this important cross-border conservation area.

They noted the “great strides made in enhancing security and wildlife protection within the GLTFCA through the development of a GLTFCA Joint Security plans,” and the development of a Transboundary Tourism Strategic Framework.

The establishment and development of transfrontier Conservation Areas is seen as necessary towards the conservation, and sustainable utilization of natural resources beyond national boundaries.

But despite all these cross-border efforts to curb poaching, Trynos Goba of Matetsi village believes communities must be at the center of all conservation interventions.

“It is unfortunate that despite the need for conservation, communities are the key stakeholders who are most often left in the cold and benefit nothing but wildlife/human conflicts or threats from officials,” says Goba. ■



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To be the go to source of hard-hitting hyperlocal news reporting and analysis in Matabeleland.

MISSION

To produce hard-hitting journalism that informs and convenes communities of Matabeleland into empowered agents of good governance and social progress.

FOCUS AREA

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Teachers Shun Local Schools Due to Housing Shortages

In Hwange, public education is ailing. Lack of adequate housing for teachers is worsening the situation.

by Lethokuhle Nkomo | @The_CBNews

Geoffrey Ncube, a teacher at one of the satellite schools in Hwange district, is frustrated a lot.

After graduating with a Diploma in teaching from Hillside Teachers College a year ago, Ncube never expected to sleep in a storeroom because of lack of staff accommodation at his school.

“

My first deployment was at a satellite school in the Sidinda

area. I actually spent the whole term staying in a classroom storeroom.

Geoffrey Ncube, a teacher

”

“I had to plead for a transfer, and was lucky to be transferred to another primary school where I stay in a shabby building. At least, I no longer stay in the storeroom.”

His frustrations are shared by several other teachers in the district.

Teachers are not staying long as they quickly seek transfers to other districts and provinces, parents say, adding that this is contributing to the poor pass rate.

Dickson Mudenda, a parent of a learner at Neshaya Secondary, says this has affected the performances of her child.

“

My slow learner child is struggling to cope as she has had many different teachers because the educators are not staying long at the school.

Dickson Mudenda, a parent

”

Broken windows covered with plastic, unplastered buildings with cracked walls and roofs mirror the stare of teachers' cottages at most Hwange schools.

Lack of water, electricity and the roaming of wildlife add to the basket of challenges they face in their line of duty.

Hwange District has 93 primary and 37 secondary schools. Of these, there are 10 primary and 13 secondary annex schools.

Hwange District School Inspector, Walter Moyo acknowledged the shortages of accommodation for teachers in the district.

“At some schools, teachers share one big house. There is no privacy, and this affects the teachers so much that they end up seeking transfers,” Moyo says.

He says infrastructural development in

the district is very low, with communities also unable to support material and financial support to contribute towards the construction of cottages due to poverty.

“

Classrooms and cottages for teachers in Hwange district are mainly constructed through the help of donors.

Last year, we saw the completion of 3 classroom blocks constructed by World Vision.

Walter Moyo, Hwange District School Inspector

”

The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Primary and Secondary Education, Torerai Moyo says his committee recently conducted a tour of schools in the district where they came across the sad state of affairs.

Moyo says the Primary and Secondary Education ministry has a duty to ensure educators stay in conducive environments.

“There are a number of challenges that are faced by teachers in Hwange district.

“In terms of teacher shortages, we want to appeal to the ministry and also the Public Service Commission to ensure that the recruitment of teachers should be decentralised so that teachers from Hwange teach in Hwange,” Moyo says. ■

Out of Work Villagers Strike Beekeeping Gold

A flourishing bee keeping, honey processing and packaging project has transformed the lives of the previously jobless villagers in Matobo District in Matabeleland South province. - [Chronicle](#) ■

BCC Blamed for Refuse Collection Struggles

The shortage of refuse compactors has forced the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) to alter its refuse collection schedule, a situation which has inconvenienced residents. - [CITE](#) ■

Water Crisis Doesn't Worry Bulawayo's Hydroponics Farmer

A Bulawayo youth is making a living through growing lettuce and strawberries for sale at his family home in Sizinda suburb, using hydroponics.

Hydroponics is a type of horticulture and a subset of hydroculture which involves growing plants, usually crops without soil by using water-based mineral nutrient solutions in aqueous solvents. - [Chronicle](#) ■

In Bulawayo, 23 High School Pupils Fall into a Hysteria, Lessons Suspended

Twentythree pupils at Amhlophe High School in Bulawayo recently fell into a hysteria, prompting the school to suspend lessons and allow for counselling services. - [Chronicle](#) ■



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Prostitution and Fast Cash: The Bitter-Sweet Menace of Truckers

Illegal truck stops bring brisk business in an otherwise economically starved town of Hwange, but this benefit comes with the unwanted dangers of child prostitution.

by Lethokuhle Nkomo | @The_CBNews

An 'illegal' truck stop has brought life to Change village in Hwange.

Known for little economic activity, the area is now bustling with all kinds of 'hustling' activities, but child prostitution has increased.

Belinda (16) is one of the teenage girls who frequent the truck stop for sex work.

Belinda says the one hour journey from her Dete home to the area for sex work every weekend ensures that she makes enough to meet her needs

in the face of high joblessness.

"The haulage trucks have brought life to this community," Belinda says.

"We sell food and do some piece jobs for them. Of course some of the piece jobs include sexual favours, and they pay handsomely."

This is not the only illegal truck stop.

The mushrooming of coal mining ventures such as Dinson Colliery Coking Plant (DCCP), Zimbabwe Zhing Zhong Coking Company

(ZZZCC) among others in Hwange has seen pockets of illegal truck stops being set up.

While informal traders are enjoying business from the truckers, there is a concern among community members over the resultant increase in child prostitution.

A haulage truck driver who preferred to be called Moyo says the “new truck stop” is convenient for the truckers, but denies claims of fuelling child prostitution.

“Of course, community members associate truckers with illicit behaviors, they label us. We prefer it here because it is central. It is near the mines, there is food from the shops and also lots of entertainment,” says Moyo

Truckers sometimes spend days at the truck stops waiting to carry coal from the mines to various destinations such as Zambia and Botswana.

Child rights’ experts feel the truck stops are fuelling child prostitution in the district.

“

We are seeing even Form 1 and 2s sleeping in these trucks for sex work. The truck stops are slowly becoming a social misfit in our community.

Theresa Mnkuli, a child rights’ activist

”

“My worry is that this behavior will soon corrupt most young girls in our community as it is already

evidenced by a high number of teenage pregnancies,” says Mnkuli, a child rights’ activist under the umbrella Women of Zimbabwe (WCOZ) Young Women Forum.

Child prostitution is illegal.

Statistics from the Women Coalition of Zimbabwe show that the country recorded an estimated 5000 teenage pregnancies between January 2021 and February 2021 at the height of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

There were also 1 800 entered early marriages during the same period.

According to Plan International, currently 31% of girls under the age of 18 are married and of these, 4% were married before 15 years.

Lorraine Mubayira, the Hwange WCOZ Young Women Forum chairperson, says community members including truckers must work together towards eliminating child prostitution.

“Let us not blame each other on the matters of child prostitution. What we need is to work together in driving the social ill out,” Mubariya says.

But Ward 20 Councilor Ishmael Kwidini feels the truck stops must be abolished with immediate effect.

“The company which will be providing coal for these haulage trucks should make sure that they create a suitable parking space for their trucks somewhere far from the homes and not at the shopping center,” Kwidini says.

“We are also urging the young teenagers to desist from associating with the truckers.” ■



Wild Animals Compete with Humans for Scarce Water

Like domestic livestock, the wild animals have also been affected by scarcity of water. The situation has forced animals to compete for the precious liquid with humans.

by Bokani Mudimba | @The_CBNews

Villagers in Simangani and Mashala outside Hwange town are sitting on a health time bomb as they have to share dirty water with both domestic and wild animals.

“Our borehole broke down last year and since then we have been relying on a nearby stream for water, both for domestic use and for our livestock,” Mashala Top senior village head Elinat Tshuma says.

“Now the stream is drying up and the few remaining pools are muddy.”

“

It’s also a health risk because baboons, donkeys, dogs and other animals drink from the same small muddy pools.

Elinat Tshuma, a senior village head

”

She says efforts to rehabilitate the borehole have been fruitless because villagers have been struggling to contribute US\$1 each per household to repair the solar inverter at the borehole.

The broken down solar powered borehole was installed by World Vision six years ago.

A community nutritional garden which used to be a source of living for the villagers has dried up because of lack of water.

Tshuma says women and girls are the worst affected, waking up before dawn to search for water, risking being attacked by roaming wildlife.

“People have been waking up very early to the broken down borehole which used to supply water to three villages, each with 25 households,” according to Butindi village head, Bernard Shoko.

Shoko says villagers now spend more time looking for water than attending to chores such as gardening.

The Mashala stream connects with Deka River which is heavily polluted by effluent from coal mining companies in Hwange town.

“

The remaining pools are drying up. People dig small wells on the sand to fetch water and each time they have to first scoop out mud because we share it with animals.

Bernard Shoko, Butindi village head

”

He says the worst affected villages are Mashala Top, Mashala and Butindi.

Another village head, Raphael Nyoni urged the Central

Government to urgently address the water challenges.

“Water is a right and it becomes violated when people struggle to access it. Government should prioritise water provision to prevent diseases and to improve people’s livelihoods,” Nyoni says.

Authorities from the District Development Fund (DDF) recently visited the area, raising hopes among villagers that the borehole will be repaired.

DDF working with Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) are currently rehabilitating infrastructure such as water sources and roads in rural areas.

Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement Minister Anxious Masuka is on record saying about 60 percent of the 35 000 boreholes that the Central Government plans to sink will be completed this year.

A borehole for each village will also help reduce distance travelled by communities to access water.

The country has 44 950 boreholes and of these, only 25 000 are functional, according to the Lands ministry.

Chief Hwange says a number of villages face water challenges.

“It’s not Mashala alone that faces water challenges. If you go further down towards Deka mouth there are communities that are in dry-land and have no source of clean water.”

Simangani Mashala Hwange Rural District councillor Ames Phiri, says the local authority has a plan to provide clean water to communities using devolution funds.

But Chief Hwange is not convinced.

“It will be wise to even force companies operating here to drill boreholes for communities because they are just polluting the environment and rivers yet villagers are not benefiting,” he says. ■



Villagers Bear Brunt of Human-wildlife Conflict

An increase in human-wildlife conflict has claimed lives, and left villagers counting losses. And now the ban on ivory trade has exacerbated the situation.

by Georgina Soko | @The_CBNews

Hlanganani Dube of Mabale village says he is lucky to be alive.

As he adjusts his sitting posture on a wooden traditional chair, Dube recalls how he miraculously escaped the jaws of death when a jumbo decided to spare his life.

The events of the fateful day will remain etched in his memory, he says.

“I still don’t know why the elephant didn’t finish me off and decided to spare my life. It’s still a

mystery to me and I consider myself lucky to have lived to tell the tale,” Dube says.

Dube was left with permanent injuries, and is unable to do any physical work, including attending to his cattle and fending for his children.

Dube says communities such as his that are adjacent Hwange

National Park are at the mercy of human-wildlife conflict particularly from elephants.

He feels communities must be given a voice in wildlife management and conservation.

Chief Nelukoba of Hwange and his counterpart Chief Matupula of Tsholotsho whose areas share boundaries with Hwange National Park told delegates during a recent African Elephant Conference that communities must not be left behind in wildlife conservation.

“We cannot continue to ignore the fact that communities are paying dearly and bearing the cost of conserving elephants,” Chief Nelukoba says.

“It’s very unfair that there’s no compensation for the loss of crops, livestock and human life due to wild animal attacks.”

Statistics from the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority (Zimparks) show that 35 people have been killed by wild animals across the country since January, with the bulk being victims of elephant attacks.

Recently, two Hwange residents Israel Ndaba and Obert Sigola were trampled to death by elephants on their way home.

Zimparks says the country’s jumbo population

has risen to almost 90 000, more than twice the 45 000 it can sustain resulting in human animal conflict.

Elephant culling was abandoned several years ago following the promulgation of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which imposed a global ban on ivory trade.

According to official reports, the country currently has a 136 tonnes stockpile of US\$600 million worth of ivory and rhino horn.

The central government recently appealed to the European Union to assist in having the unilateral ban on ivory trade lifted.

The government contends that it is spending resources protecting elephants and rhinos without unlocking any value.

Zimbabwe is among several African countries that are pushing for the revocation of the ban on elephant culling.

They argue that lifting the ban will assist in generating money to support sustainable wildlife conservation efforts.

At the elephant conference, ministers and senior government officials from South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe produced a position paper titled: *Hwange Declaration on the Conservation of the African Elephant*.

It emphasises the need to involve local communities in the decision making on matters to do with elephant management and conservation. ■



Why are Local Arts Ventures Failing?

Artistes from Matabeleland are finding it hard to monetize their products and rely on donations to stay afloat.

by Thabani H. Moyo | @thabanih

The cultural sector depends significantly on philanthropic funds. This makes it look like the sector is inefficient or its products are not in commercial demand. But this is far from the truth; the arts are in demand. The arts have public value. Most of the artists and arts

organisations are finding it difficult to keep afloat.

They live from hand to mouth.

The arts organisations that come to mind are Sadalala Amajekete, Lothu Lothu, Blue Virgins, TASA,

AmaAfrika Aqotho and many others. These groups were vibrant. Today they are non-existent. So why is it that most artists and these arts organisations have failed in their business

ventures?

Matabeleland's cultural sector is largely fragmented and operating in an informal manner. Most of the arts institutions around don't have proper structures that can make them run professionally. Most of the funding currently comes from embassies accredited to Zimbabwe and United Nations (UN) agencies. These funds are availed to the sector on the funder's preferred thrust.

Given the geographical location of most embassies, it is always a challenge for most artists and arts organisations in the region to access the funding. Funded art models do not work according to the artist's vision and needs but to what the funder wants. This approach has added to the perception that the arts are not businesses that can benefit the community but are there merely for entertainment.

Most artists in Matabeleland are always looking for information on how to access available funding. It is this mentality that has seen Zimbabwe produce artists that are dependent on funding. One has to ask themselves what happens when these embassies and other organisations disappear with their funds.

Most individuals and

organisations that have relied on funding have quickly gone under as soon as funding dries up.

By now artists and arts organisations must have realised that external funding is reactive and sporadic, rather than proactive and strategic. A more strategic and effective approach to creating relevant products, spending and programming is needed.

I have noted that most artists still operate from the cooperative model. This model dictates that when an arts group has a gig and raises money this money should be shared equally at the end of the gig. This approach will not build the arts but will see groups or arts organisations coming up.

It is time artists and arts organisations came up with business models that are sustainable. It is time that artists and arts organisations started running profitable projects. It is time that artists learn more about how to grow business. It is time that artists became disciplined and invested their little

emoluments into their arts businesses with the view of getting profits.

Most of the arts groups disappear soon after the founder of the group leader dies. This goes on to show that these groups lack structures. Once the founder dies the project goes under. It is time that artists from the region came up with organisations that have trusted structures by the business community, organisations that are able to sustain artists and grow the cultural economy of Matabeleland.

It is time that artists came up with viable business models that will attract the corporate world. It is time that artists get proper training in business and come up with start-ups that are relevant to the Matabeleland business environment. ■



Illustration by Matt Chase

UMZINGWANE



Villagers Walk Over 26 Km to Reach Local Clinic

Umzingwane villagers face continued threats of dying before reaching the closest clinic should they need urgent medical care. The villagers are blaming the local government for dithering on their plans to construct a clinic to address the problem which has lingered for several decades.

by Vusindlu Maphosa | @The_CBNews

All hope is lost for Martin Sibanda as he shakes his head and recounts the 26km journey to and from the closest clinic.

Just like Sibanda, villagers in Sotshe village, ward 9 have been enduring the pain of walking several kilometres to access health services.

elusive that it requires one to walk across mountains to reach Mhlahlandlela clinic situated in ward 10 even when they are critically ill."

Martin Sibanda, a distressed villager

Sibanda says some expecting mothers end

"Access to health services here is so

up choosing to camp at the clinic to avoid miscarriages caused by the perilous journey from their homes to the health centre.

The villagers have now submitted a request for the construction of a clinic in their village to the local government. But the Umzingwane Rural District Council (RDC) under whose jurisdiction the village lies, has not yet approved the application.

Sibanda feels the Council is not taking the villagers' right to healthcare seriously and believes the delay in approving the application proves the local authority's lack of interest in the matter.

Another villager, Senzeni Moyo says the delay in approving the application poses serious threats to the vulnerable members of the community such as pregnant women, chronically ill people, and the elderly.

"The delay is a threat to vulnerable members of the community such as pregnant women. Chronically ill people and the elderly are also affected," says Moyo.



The long distance to closest clinics has seen some chronic patients defaulting on taking their medication. Image by Stock photos

Ward 9 Councillor, Bekezela Moyo, believes the approval of the plan by the local authority has taken unnecessarily long.

"It's been a long time since we applied for the construction of the clinic. It is our wish that the council view the project as a matter of

urgency."

"We have lost lives, especially women who give birth along the way to the clinic, while some lose their babies due to unsafe delivery methods at home," Moyo says.

Moyo says chronic patients end up defaulting on taking medication while some mothers fail to take their children to the baby clinic because of the distance.

"Villagers have always resorted to using scotch carts to travel which is not comfortable for a sick person."

Bekezela Moyo, Ward 9 Councillor

Umzingwane RDC Chief Executive Officer, Ndumiso Mpofu says it is not true that the local authority is sitting on the application.

"We are still waiting for the physical planning department to produce a site plan, before we will act as a local authority. We have adopted a master plan for each and every ward to locate a site where a clinic will be constructed."

Ndumiso Mpofu, Umzingwane RDC CEO

"We will use the 2023 wards development funds budget for such projects to be undertaken looking at the fact that community members walk long distances to access health facilities."

"We do not stop the communities from continuing to continue mobilising resources for the building material of the clinics from sponsors or well-wishers." ■

FROM THE WEB



Save the Children in Zimbabwe

2 d · 🌐

#Highlights from day 3, Seed Fairs: Smallholder farmers in Beitbridge and Matobo continue to receive seed vouchers and they use th... See more



The Girls Table

3 d · 🌐

One of our Milika champions mobilised 9 young women from ward 6 to register to vote. We assisted them with transport from their ward to @ZECzim registration office at Tsholotsho Business Centre.

#YWEEP
#RegisterToVoteZW
#YourVotelsYourVoice



Hwange Local Board

@hwangetown

Today beneficiaries of Empumalanga West housing project held a fruitful meeting with officials from @hwangetown, @ministry_local and @MAmenities where it was revealed it was revealed that servicing was nearing completion @HwangeResidents @molokele @RuralDigiFocus @Vostile1



Habakkuk Trust

1 d · 🌐

Pictured Below: Children collect water from a tap situated 2 kms from the Solar Powered Water System installed from CAMPFIRE funds... See more



PICTURE OF THE WEEK

The Citizen Bulletin is doing more than just community storytelling. Please send us great pictures which are inline with our reporting themes from and around Matabeleland and Bulawayo.



Kamandama Mine Widows Forgotten and Neglected

Widows who lost their husbands in the Kamandama mine disaster are living in abject poverty as they do not have any support from the Hwange Colliery Company or the Central Government.

by Georgina Soko | @The_CBNews

It's exactly 10.25 a.m. on June 6 when a mock blast tears through the serene environment at the Kamandama memorial site.

Emotions swell among the 33 surviving widows whose spouses lost their lives in a mine accident on June 6 1972.

A methane gas explosion hit Hwange Colliery Company Limited's No. 2 mine shaft, killing 427 miners on the day.

The accident, one of the worst mine disasters recorded, was so bad that most miners' bodies were not retrieved and the shaft sealed off.

It was declared a national disaster, and is the worst in Zimbabwe's mining history to date.

Most of the victims, who were mostly in their 20s and 30s, left young families behind.

Fifty-years later, the wounds have not healed for the 33 surviving widows.

“

We are tired of being taken for

granted by Hwange Colliery Company (HCC); our welfare should be prioritized as our husbands died on duty serving the company. We are hungry and live in abject poverty. It's not fair that the company continues to tell the world lies that they are taking care of us.

One widow

”

Another widow, Regina Ngwenya reveals that the HCC is paying them RTGS200 per month, a figure not enough to buy a loaf of bread. The cheapest bread costs \$0.93 which is equivalent to RTGS390 as of July 18.

“

If they could even give us at least US\$50 a month as compared to the RTGS200 we have been receiving as Ecocash we would be better off.

Regina Ngwenya, a widow

”

Minister of Mines and Mining Development, Winston Chitando was forced to convene a meeting with widows, management and Matabeleland North Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Richard Moyo over the concerns of the widows on the sidelines of the Kamandama commemorations held on June 6.

Kamandama Widows Association representative, Anna Phiri (64) who also attended the closed door meeting with the minister, says they were promised US\$200 once-off payments.

“This day now serves as a painful reminder for most of us that they (our husbands) died for nothing. We don’t know if the money is going to be in cash or will be converted to local currency,” Phiri says.

The Citizen Bulletin has gathered that the HCC has been employing dependents of the victims.

The coal mining company also introduced the Kamandama mine memorial golf tournament to raise material and financial resources for the widows.

Repeated calls by families of the deceased miners to have June 6 declared a national holiday in honor of the 427 miners have fallen on deaf ears.

Hwange Central Member of Parliament, Daniel Molekele says the HCC and government are duty bound to take care of the widows, and other dependents of the victims. ■



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