

Impact of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining on Smallholder Farming -The Case of Shurugwi and Mashava in Zimbabwe

Alexander Mapfumo

Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Globally, artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) has been blamed for impoverishing rural farmers due to changes in rural landscapes. This study aims to explore the impact of ASM on smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe and identify the challenges and opportunities they face. The data which was analysed was collected from Shurugwi and Mashava areas in Zimbabwe. Self-administered Structured questionnaires were completed for 168 randomly selected respondents out of 986 households. Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0 was used for analysing data after it was examined for accuracy by arranging it into manageable units and identifying patterns among variables after examining it for accuracy. One of the primary challenges faced by smallholder farmers is the competition for land and water resources. ASM activities often encroach on agricultural land, leading to the displacement of farmers and loss of productive farming areas. Additionally, water bodies are contaminated by mining activities, affecting irrigation systems and access to clean water for both drinking and farming purposes. Furthermore, ASM has led to environmental degradation, including deforestation and soil erosion, which threatens the long-term sustainability of agriculture. The influx of miners has increased social issues such as crime, prostitution, and the spread of diseases, further impacting the livelihoods and well-being of smallholder farmers. Despite these challenges, ASM also presents some opportunities for smallholder farmers. Some farmers have successfully diversified their income sources by engaging in mining activities or providing goods and services to miners. Additionally, the demand for food and other commodities by miners has created market opportunities for farmers, although access to these markets may be limited due to lack of infrastructure and quality standards. To mitigate the negative impacts of ASM on smallholder farmers, effective land use planning and enforcement of regulations can help protect agricultural land from encroachment by miners. Promoting sustainable mining practices and providing technical assistance to miners can minimize environmental degradation and health risks. Improving infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, can enhance farmers' access to markets. Strategic interventions are needed to ensure that ASM activities are conducted sustainably and in harmony with the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Keywords: Smallholder farmers, Mining, Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), Zimbabwe