POLICY BRIEFING FOR THOUGHT LEADERS, POLICY MAKERS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AND CIVIC CAPTAINS OF HWANGE DISTRICT **By: Lucky Daka Director, COHA Consultancy Group Local Governance Specialist**

THE PARADOX OF THE HONEYBEE: WHY SENA VILLAGE THIRSTS IN THE SHADOW OF "WHITE GOLD"



Nature offers us a profound, timeless lesson in resource extraction through the **paradox of the honeybee**. When a bee alights upon a flower, it extracts nectar to build wealth in its hive. Yet, in taking, it leaves the garden richer than it found it. Through pollination, the bee bestows life, abundance, and future fertility upon the entire ecosystem. It takes value, but its presence guarantees shared survival.

Look at **Kamativi Ward** today, and you will see a very different logic at play.

International consortiums have descended upon our soil to extract **lithium** the coveted "white gold" fueling the global transition to green energy and electric vehicles. On paper, it is framed as modern progress. But in villages like **Sena**, the paradox of the bee is turned on its head: global wealth expands, while the local community is left drained, depleted, and thirsty.

1. The Coloniality of Extraction: Global Green, Local Grief

To understand why Sena Village is thirsting, our thought leaders must look beyond simple corporate negligence and confront a deeper, systemic issue: **the lingering dynamics of coloniality**.

Colonialism as a political system ended, but its underlying economic framework **coloniality** remains deeply embedded. Historically, imperial powers extracted raw minerals from Africa to enrich western metropolises, leaving behind environmental ruin and local impoverishment. Today, the global North and expanding green tech markets demand our lithium to power zero-emission vehicles and decarbonize distant cities. Yet, the price of their "green revolution" is being exacted from the mothers and children of Sena Village.

Hard-rock lithium processing demands millions of liters of water daily for dust suppression, ore washing, and chemical processing. While corporate plants run nonstop using local aquifers and surface water, local residents walk long distances under a scorching sun to fetch water from dirty pools, shallow wells, or crocodile-infested dams. This is the ultimate environmental contradiction: ***powering a global green transition by exhausting the immediate water tables of rural African communities.***

2. Breaking the "Happy Slave" Trap

Too often, host communities and local leadership fall into what philosophers call the **"happy slave" perception** a mindset where a subjugated people celebrate minor crumbs while their entire house is being emptied.

When a mining company graded a dirt road, provided a handful of low-wage casual jobs, or donated a few footballs, and communities celebrate it as grand benevolence. But this is the classic "happy slave" trap, being so grateful for the bare minimum that we fail to demand true ownership, structural equity, and long-term sustainability.

Graded dirt roads wash away in the next rainy season; clean water aquifers, once depleted or contaminated, are lost for generations. Hwange's thought leaders must think beyond corporate hand-outs as a substitute for real, transformative community development.

3. Why Mining Must Mirror National Vision

Demanding equitable development is not anti-investment or anti-growth; on the contrary, it is direct alignment with national economic strategy.

Zimbabwe's **National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2)** explicitly establishes **Devolution and Decentralization**, **Infrastructure Development**, and **Food Security, Climate Resilience, and Environmental Protection** as key foundational pillars. Furthermore, NDS2 is built on the core principle of *"leaving no one and no place behind"*.

When lithium operations drain the water tables of Sena Village without investing in permanent domestic water networks, they act in direct contradiction to NDS2's mandate for inclusive growth and local sustainability.

NDS2 demands that resource extraction must feed into local industrialization, rural infrastructure, and climate resilience. Demanding that lithium companies build solar boreholes, piped domestic water networks, and sand dams in Sena Village is simply translating NDS2 policy into practical reality on the ground.

4. Dismantling the Colonial Legacy

To achieve genuine **decoloniality** where indigenous communities exercise true agency over their resources we must critically re-examine our legal frameworks, starting with the **Mines and Minerals Act**. Conceived in the colonial era (1961), the Act was designed to prioritize mining rights over surface rights, land ownership, local environmental health, and community welfare. Under this outdated legal legacy:

1. **Resource Primacy over Life:** Mining operations are legally empowered to access vast tracts of land and water sources, often sidelining the immediate needs of surrounding communities.

2. **Centralized Revenue Allocation:** Mineral royalties often flow back to central government chests or offshore corporate accounts, bypassing local councils like the **Hwange Rural District Council** that bear the environmental burden.
3. **Decolonizing the Law:** Thought leaders must champion legal reform that explicitly embeds environmental justice, local water rights, mandatory closed-loop water recycling, and local value-addition into national mining laws.

5. Decolonizing the Mine: The Logic of the Bee

Decolonization is not merely a theoretical concept; it is a practical economic necessity. To decolonize lithium extraction in Kamativi Ward means shifting from parasitic extraction to symbiotic co-existence. To ensure that there is sustainability when the lithium deposit reaches geological extinction, corporate operators and local authorities must adopt the **"Logic of the Bee"**:

The Call to Action

A bee never destroys the blossom from which it draws life. As thought leaders, civic captains, and policymakers of Hwange, we must reject the "happy slave" perception that settles for corporate scraps while our aquifers are pumped dry. By standing firmly on the principles of NDS2, pushing for the decolonization of our mining laws, and demanding the Logic of the Bee, we can ensure that the "white gold" beneath our soil enriches not just distant global markets, but the people of Sena Village.

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