

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome Note

Building Partnerships, Empowering Communities, Inspiring Change

Dear Partners, Colleagues, and Friends,

Welcome to the first edition of Green Governance Zimbabwe's **Quarterly Newsletter** dedicated to sharing the stories, partnerships, knowledge, and innovations driving our vision of a Green, Just and Sustainable Future.

This edition captures more than organisational milestones, it reflects the collective efforts of communities, young people, government institutions, development partners, researchers, and practitioners working together to address some of Zimbabwe's most pressing environmental and development challenges. It is a celebration of collaboration, innovation, and the shared commitment to building resilient communities and sustainable livelihoods.

Over the past few months, we have witnessed the remarkable potential of youth-led innovation through the Urban Futures Entrepreneurship Masterclass, welcomed the Mutare Youth Champions who will champion sustainable urban development over the coming year, showcased climate-smart enterprises at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF), and launched Pathways for Green Governance in Zimbabwe, a publication contributing to national dialogue on climate resilience, environmental governance, and sustainable development. These milestones demonstrate that lasting change is achieved through partnerships, shared knowledge, and empowered communities working towards a common purpose.

As an organisation, Green Governance Zimbabwe continues to strengthen its role as a trusted platform for research, policy engagement, advocacy, and community action. We recognise that today's environmental challenges—from climate change and biodiversity loss to food insecurity and unsustainable natural resource management—require bold thinking, collaborative leadership, and practical, locally driven solutions. Through our programmes, research, and strategic partnerships, we remain committed to ensuring that communities are not only heard but are empowered to lead the transformation towards a more sustainable and climate-resilient Zimbabwe.

As you turn these pages, I invite you to look beyond the activities and discover the people behind the progress, the entrepreneurs creating green businesses, the young leaders championing sustainable cities, the communities embracing climate-smart solutions, and the partners helping turn bold ideas into lasting impact. Their stories remind us that meaningful change begins with individuals and communities who dare to imagine a better future and work collectively to make it a reality.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our partners, supporters, government institutions, communities, and dedicated staff whose commitment continues to make this work possible. Your collaboration, trust, and shared vision have enabled us to expand our impact and continue driving innovative solutions that improve lives while safeguarding our environment for future generations.

Together, we will continue strengthening partnerships, empowering communities, generating knowledge, and championing policies that build a greener, more inclusive, and resilient Zimbabwe. We invite you to walk this journey with us as partners in shaping a sustainable future.

Thank you for being part of this journey

Warm regards,

Nyasha Frank Mpahlo

Executive Director

Green Governance Zimbabwe





Members of the Sunshine Group harvest tomatoes from the greenhouse at the Kopa Green Village Hub in Chimanimani. The greenhouse is strengthening local food security while equipping young people and women with practical agroecology skills and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

From Garden to Green Hub: How Kopa is Cultivating a More Resilient Future

What began as a small agroecology demonstration garden in Chimanimani has blossomed into a thriving centre for innovation, environmental stewardship, and youth empowerment, offering a powerful model for community-led sustainable development.

In the heart of Ward 21, Chimanimani, a remarkable transformation is taking place. Led by the youth-led Sunshine Group, the Kopa Green Village Hub has grown from a simple demonstration garden into a vibrant community hub where young people are not only learning practical green skills but are also shaping solutions to some of the most pressing environmental and socio-economic challenges facing their community.

More than a farming project, the hub represents Green Governance Zimbabwe's vision of building resilient communities through locally driven innovation. Today, it brings together agroecology, environmental restoration, green entrepreneurship, skills development, and community leadership under one roof.

The hub features an agroecology demonstration garden, a greenhouse, an indigenous tree nursery with more than 3,000 seedlings, a value-addition space, and a youth centre that serves as a training and information hub. These facilities are equipping young people with practical knowledge while strengthening local food security and environmental conservation.

Beyond agriculture, the Green Village Hub has become a safe and inclusive space where young people meet, exchange ideas, learn together, and build stronger community connections. Participants are developing practical skills in beekeeping, solar installation, fuel-efficient cookstove construction, and climate-smart farming, creating new livelihood opportunities while promoting sustainable environmental practices.

The success of Kopa demonstrates what is possible when communities are empowered to lead their own development. The hub has already attracted additional investment from partners and is now informing a broader Green Village Hubs Model, providing a blueprint that can be replicated in other communities across Zimbabwe. Planned investments in solar power, Starlink connectivity, and solar-powered food processing will further strengthen the hub's role as a centre for innovation and rural resilience.

At Green Governance Zimbabwe, we believe sustainable development begins with communities that are empowered to innovate, collaborate, and lead. The Kopa Green Village Hub is a testament to that belief, showing how local action can restore ecosystems, strengthen livelihoods, and inspire a greener, more resilient future for generations to come.



Turning Visibility into Growth: How One Trade Fair Opened New Markets for Zazi Foods

For many small businesses, producing a quality product is only half the journey. Finding customers, accessing markets, and building a recognizable brand often prove to be the greatest challenges.

For Rufaro Waziweyi, founder of Zazi Foods, these were the obstacles standing between a promising idea and a thriving enterprise.



Rufaro Waziweyi (centre) with fellow Urban Futures-supported youth entrepreneurs at the Green Governance Urban Futures stand during the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF).

Through Zazi Foods, the commercial arm of Afrobite Enterprises, Rufaro transforms locally produced crops into value-added food products, including her signature pickled okra available in regular, chilli, and garlic flavours, as well as a range of handcrafted chilli sauces. Yet despite the uniqueness of her products, expanding beyond local markets remained a persistent challenge.



"We had good products, but reaching larger markets and attracting customers was difficult," Rufaro reflects."

That journey began to change through the Youth Green Transition (YGT) Project, which equipped her with practical skills to strengthen and grow her business. During the project's Export Readiness Training, Rufaro gained valuable knowledge on regulatory compliance, market research, product positioning, and sales planning. The programme also connected her with packaging suppliers and potential retail partners, helping her understand what it takes to compete in larger markets.

The real breakthrough came when she was selected to showcase her products at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF), one of the country's premier business and trade exhibitions.

"I was very excited when I heard I had been selected to exhibit at ZITF," Rufaro says. "The project supported us with transport, accommodation, exhibition space, and publicity opportunities we could not have afforded on our own."

Exhibiting alongside established companies gave Rufaro an opportunity to introduce Zazi Foods to thousands of visitors from across Zimbabwe and beyond. Her innovative pickled okra quickly attracted attention, becoming one of the most talked-about products on display. Positive customer feedback, increased product sales, and valuable conversations with buyers confirmed that demand for her products extended well beyond her immediate community.

The exposure translated into tangible business opportunities.

Following the exhibition, Zazi Foods secured a supply agreement with a retailer opening a new outlet in Ruwa, established relationships with more affordable packaging suppliers, and generated interest from prospective buyers in Bulawayo. The increased online visibility also attracted attention from the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Mutare,

creating new opportunities for mentorship and institutional support.

Beyond commercial success, Rufaro's business contributes to a broader environmental purpose. By preserving locally grown fruits and vegetables that might otherwise go to waste, Zazi Foods helps reduce post-harvest losses while supporting climate-smart food systems. Her business also creates reliable markets for produce sourced directly from smallholder women farmers, strengthening local livelihoods and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Looking ahead, Rufaro envisions expanding Zazi Foods into new markets, creating employment opportunities, and increasing the availability of nutritious, value-added food products across Zimbabwe.

Her advice to other young entrepreneurs is simple but powerful:

"Make the most of every opportunity, no matter how small. Stay focused, keep learning, and believe in the value of what you're building."

For Rufaro, participating in ZITF was more than attending an exhibition, it was a gateway to new markets, stronger partnerships, and renewed confidence. Her journey demonstrates how strategic business support and access to high-profile platforms can transform promising enterprises into businesses ready to grow, innovate, and contribute to more sustainable food systems.



A selection of ZAZI Foods' signature products, featuring pickled okra in regular, garlic, and chilli flavours, alongside its handcrafted chilli sauces.

From Local Innovation to National Markets: Youth Green Entrepreneurs Shine at ZITF 2026

Zimbabwe International Trade Fair provided more than an exhibition space, it became a launchpad for young entrepreneurs proving that green innovation can drive economic growth, strengthen food systems, and create sustainable livelihoods.

When thousands of visitors converged at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in Bulawayo this April, they encountered more than innovative products. They met a new generation of young entrepreneurs demonstrating how climate-smart enterprises are shaping the future of sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

Through the Youth Green Transition Project, Green Governance Zimbabwe, in partnership with Hivos Southern

Africa and Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Organisation (BVTO), supported young entrepreneurs to exhibit their products and businesses at one of the country's premier trade and investment platforms. The exhibition created a valuable opportunity for participants to move beyond local markets, engage with potential customers and investors, and showcase solutions that contribute to resilient and inclusive food systems.

The entrepreneurs displayed a wide range of innovative products developed through sustainable production practices. For many, the fair marked their first opportunity to present their businesses on a national platform, building confidence, expanding professional networks, and gaining exposure to new market opportunities.

A highlight of the exhibition was the visit by Mr. Ilyaas Sherally, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi.

His engagement with the young entrepreneurs reaffirmed the importance of investing in youth-led innovation and recognised the progress being made through the Youth Green Transition Project, which is supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The exhibition also showcased the tangible results of months of investment in entrepreneurship development. Through the project, participants have strengthened their technical skills, refined their products and branding, enhanced business management capacity, and undergone export-readiness training to prepare Zimbabwean green products for regional and international markets.

Beyond displaying products, the entrepreneurs shared

powerful stories of resilience, innovation, and transformation. Their businesses demonstrate how young people are responding to climate and economic challenges by creating practical solutions that generate income, strengthen food security, and contribute to sustainable urban food systems.

Participation at ZITF reinforced Green Governance Zimbabwe's belief that empowering young entrepreneurs goes beyond providing training. It requires creating opportunities for market access, strategic partnerships, and visibility that enable businesses to grow and compete.

As Zimbabwe accelerates its transition towards a greener and more inclusive economy, these young entrepreneurs are showing that the future of sustainable development is already taking shape, driven by innovation, supported through partnerships, and powered by young people determined to create lasting change.



Photo 1 – Urban Futures Exhibition Participants

Young entrepreneurs from the Mutare Urban Futures Project showcase their innovative green products at the Urban Futures exhibition stand during the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) 2026, connecting with new markets and demonstrating the potential of youth-led sustainable enterprises.



Photo 2 – Deputy Ambassador Visit

Mr. Ilyaas Sherally, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, visits the Urban Futures exhibition stand at ZITF 2026, reaffirming support for youth-led green innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship through the Youth Green Transition Project.

Advancing Green Thinking: GGZ Launches New Book on Green Governance

On the 2nd June 2026, Green Governance Zimbabwe, in partnership with ActionAid Zimbabwe, officially launched Pathways for Green Governance in Zimbabwe: Energy Transition, Climate Finance and Ecofeminism, a landmark publication that contributes to national conversations on climate resilience, environmental governance, and sustainable development.

The publication explores some of Zimbabwe's most pressing environmental challenges while presenting practical, evidence-based pathways for advancing renewable energy, climate finance, biodiversity conservation, community-led adaptation, and gender-responsive environmental governance. More than a collection of research, the book serves as a resource for

policymakers, researchers, development practitioners, students, civil society, and citizens committed to building a more resilient and sustainable Zimbabwe.

Building on the foundation of Green Governance Zimbabwe's first publication, **The Just Energy Transition in Zimbabwe: Social, Economic and Environmental Perspectives**, this latest volume expands the national dialogue by exploring emerging issues at the intersection of energy transition, climate finance, and ecofeminism.

One of the publication's key milestones has been its endorsement by government stakeholders, reflecting growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based policy and collaborative approaches in addressing climate and environmental challenges.

In his keynote address, Mr. Lovemore Dhoba, Acting Director of the Climate Change Management Department, acknowledged the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls, describing them as critical agents of resilience and environmental stewardship.

"Women and the most unfortunate girl child are often disproportionately affected by climate change, yet they

remain among the most effective agents of resilience and environmental stewardship," he said.

The launch represents another step in Green Governance Zimbabwe's commitment to generating knowledge that informs policy, strengthens practice, and inspires action. As climate change continues to reshape communities and economies, accessible research and practical solutions remain essential to advancing a green, just, and sustainable future.

The publication is available to individuals and institutions interested in deepening their understanding of climate governance and sustainable development, further reinforcing GGZ's role as a trusted knowledge partner in Zimbabwe's green transition.

Explore our publications:

- **Pathways for Green Governance in Zimbabwe:** Energy Transition, Climate Finance and Ecofeminism – [Download Book](#)
- **The Just Energy Transition in Zimbabwe:** Social, Economic and Environmental Perspectives – [Download Book](#)



Celebrating a milestone in environmental thought leadership. From Left to Right, **Hilton Chingosho** (Book Chapter Contributor), **Nyasha Frank Mpahlo** (Executive Director, Green Governance Zimbabwe), **Dr Selina C. Pasirayi** (Country Director, ActionAid Zimbabwe), **Lovemore Dhoba** (Acting Director for Climate Change Management), and **Judith Marera** (Book Chapter Contributor) pose with copies of *Pathways for Green Governance* during its official launch, marking a significant contribution to climate governance and sustainable development discourse in Zimbabwe.

From a Home Kitchen to Supermarket Shelves:

How Safarii Fruits Turned Indigenous Fruits into a Growing Enterprise

Every successful business begins with an idea. For Michael Takawira, that idea was rooted in Zimbabwe's rich indigenous fruits and a belief that they could be transformed into high-quality products with the power to create jobs, strengthen local food systems, and celebrate local biodiversity.



A place on the shelf, a place in the market. Safarii Fruits' indigenous wild fruit jams are now stocked in supermarkets, marking an important step in the enterprise's growth and demonstrating how value addition can transform Zimbabwe's indigenous fruits into commercially successful products.

What started as a small home-based operation has since grown into a thriving enterprise supplying supermarkets and supporting rural livelihoods.

As the founder of Safarii Fruits, Michael produces a range of indigenous fruit juices and jams made from locally sourced fruits such as masawu, baobab, and nhunguru. Yet, despite the quality and uniqueness of his products, growing the business was far from easy.

Operating from his home limited production capacity, while inadequate equipment and inconsistent packaging made it difficult to meet the quality standards required by formal retailers.

“

We had the vision and the products, but scaling the business required the right skills, equipment, and market opportunities,” Michael reflects.

That opportunity came through the Urban Futures Project, implemented by Green Governance Zimbabwe.

Through the project's Entrepreneurship Masterclass, Michael strengthened his entrepreneurial skills in financial

management, record keeping, pricing, and cash-flow planning. He also received specialized training in food processing, food safety, and quality assurance, critical areas for businesses seeking to enter formal retail markets

Equally important were the networking opportunities provided through business exhibitions and market linkage events, including participation at the 2025 Sanganai Expo, where Safarii Fruits gained greater visibility and connected with prospective buyers.

The defining turning point came when Safarii Fruits received a US\$1,500 catalytic grant through the Urban Futures Project.

The funding enabled Michael to purchase a juice filling and capping machine, dramatically improving production efficiency, packaging consistency, and product quality.

By early 2026, Safarii Fruits had outgrown its home kitchen and moved into a dedicated production facility at Mwaka Hub in Chikanga, a milestone that marked a new chapter in the enterprise's journey.

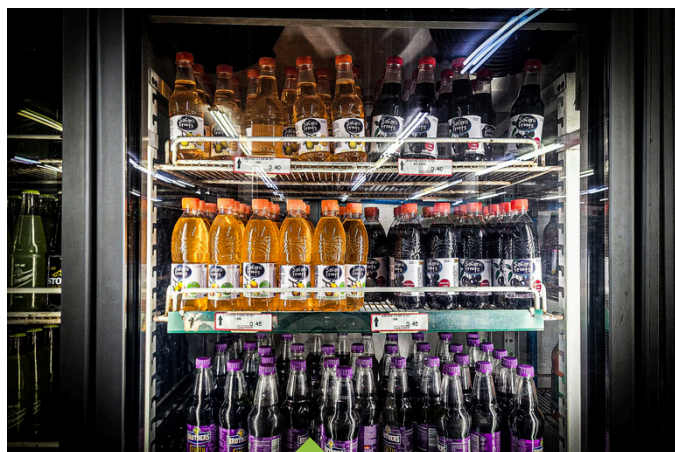
Monthly production capacity increased by more than 80 percent, allowing the business to fulfil larger orders while maintaining high standards of food safety and quality.

The investment quickly translated into new market opportunities.

Safarii Fruits secured its first formal supply agreement with Sai Mart Supermarket, bringing its indigenous fruit juices and jams onto mainstream retail shelves for the first time.

For Michael, this achievement represented much more than a commercial milestone.

"The Urban Futures Project gave me more than funding, it gave me the confidence, knowledge, and networks to grow my business. Today, Safarii Fruits is supplying a supermarket, creating jobs, and proving that indigenous fruits have real commercial value."



A place in the fridge, a place in the market. Safarii Fruits' indigenous fruit beverages are now available in supermarket refrigerators, reflecting the enterprise's transformation into a growing retail brand while promoting Zimbabwe's indigenous fruits to a wider consumer market.

Michael Takawira stands alongside a fresh delivery of Safarii Fruits' indigenous fruit beverages, ready for distribution to retail outlets. Growing demand for his products reflects the enterprise's successful transition from a home-based operation to a trusted supplier in Zimbabwe's formal retail market.

The impact extends far beyond one entrepreneur.

Today, Safarii Fruits purchases indigenous fruits from local harvesters, creating a reliable market for rural producers while adding value to crops that have traditionally been underutilized. The business now supports five local fruit harvesters and has created employment for three production assistants and one sales assistant, with plans to expand as demand continues to grow.

Consumers are also benefiting through increased access to nutritious, locally produced fruit products that celebrate Zimbabwe's indigenous biodiversity while promoting healthier, more sustainable food choices.

Looking ahead, Michael envisions expanding Safarii Fruits into additional retail outlets, increasing production, and introducing new indigenous fruit products to both local and regional markets.

His journey demonstrates how targeted investment in youth entrepreneurship, combined with practical business training, mentorship, market access, and catalytic finance, can unlock businesses capable of generating employment, strengthening local value chains, and contributing to resilient, sustainable food systems.

For Green Governance Zimbabwe's Urban Futures Project, Safarii Fruits is more than a business success story. It is a powerful example of how supporting youth-led innovation can transform local ideas into enterprises that create economic opportunity while preserving Zimbabwe's rich agricultural heritage.



June-July at a Glance



27

young
entrepreneurs
trained



13

Mutare Youth
Champions
inducted



100+

Stakeholders
engaged



2

Trade
exhibitions
attended



3

New
publications
released



WHY FOOD SYSTEMS MATTER

Understanding the connection
between food, people and
the planet



What is a Food System?

A food system includes everything involved in producing, processing, transporting, marketing, consuming, and managing food waste. It is about much more than agriculture, it is about people, livelihoods, health, businesses, the environment, and the policies that connect them.



What is a Food System?

Zimbabwe's economy and the well-being of millions of people are closely linked to agriculture and natural resources. Yet climate change, prolonged droughts, land degradation, rising food prices, and post-harvest losses continue to threaten food security and livelihoods.

Building sustainable food systems means investing in solutions that make food production more resilient while protecting the environment. This includes promoting climate-smart agriculture, reducing food loss and waste, supporting local food enterprises, improving access to markets, and ensuring that everyone has access to safe and nutritious food.

A stronger food system is not only about increasing production, it is about creating a system that benefits farmers, entrepreneurs, consumers, and future generations alike.



Did You Know?

Around one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted, while millions of people still experience food insecurity. Reducing food loss and waste is one of the most effective ways to improve food security, conserve natural resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Food Systems in Action

Building Sustainable Food Systems Through Collective Action

Sustainable food systems thrive when communities, businesses, governments, and development partners work together to:



Promote climate-smart agriculture

Support farming practices that increase productivity while restoring soils, conserving biodiversity, and strengthening resilience to climate change.



Reduce food loss and waste

Improve harvesting, storage, processing, and distribution to ensure more food reaches consumers instead of being lost along the value chain.



Protect natural resources

Safeguard water, healthy soils, forests, and biodiversity, the natural foundation upon which food production depends.

“

Why It Matters?

Healthy food systems are the foundation of healthy communities. They improve nutrition, create employment, strengthen local economies, build resilience to climate change, and reduce pressure on natural ecosystems.

By investing in sustainable food systems today, we are investing in healthier people, thriving communities, and a more resilient future for Zimbabwe.



A new cohort of change-makers. The 13 Mutare Youth Champions pose for a picture after their induction in Vumba, marking the beginning of their year-long journey with Green Governance Zimbabwe to strengthen youth leadership, promote sustainable urban food systems, and advance climate resilience under the Urban Futures Project.

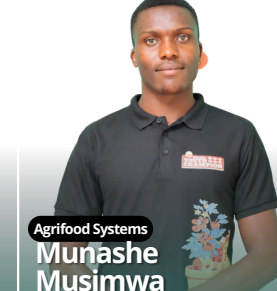
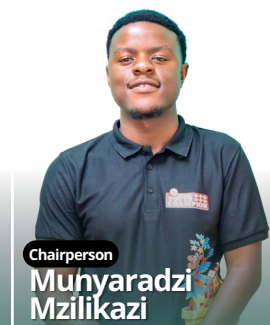
Investing in the Next Generation of Urban Leaders: Green Governance Zimbabwe Welcomes 13 Mutare Youth Champions

Green Governance Zimbabwe is proud to welcome 13 Mutare Youth Champions who will work alongside the organisation over the next year to champion sustainable urban food systems, climate resilience, and youth participation through the Urban Futures Project.

From 18–19 June 2026, the Youth Champions participated in a two-day Induction and Team Building Workshop held in Vumba, Mutare. The workshop brought together representatives from the Ministry of Youth, the Zimbabwe Youth Council (ZYC), and Green Governance Zimbabwe to equip the champions with the knowledge, leadership skills, and collaborative networks needed to effectively carry out their roles.

A key milestone of the induction was the establishment of the Mutare Youth Champions Committee through a democratic electoral process. The elections filled key leadership and thematic positions, providing the committee with a strong governance structure that will coordinate youth-led initiatives and strengthen meaningful participation in local development processes.

Over the coming year, the Youth Champions will serve as ambassadors for sustainable urban development in Mutare, working closely with Green Governance Zimbabwe and project partners to amplify youth voices, promote climate action, and drive community-led solutions that contribute to more resilient and inclusive cities.





BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GREEN ENTREPRENEURS

What does it take to transform a promising business idea into a thriving enterprise? For 27 young entrepreneurs from Mutare's food value chain, the answer laid in seven days of intensive learning, collaboration, and practical business development through the Urban Futures Entrepreneurship Masterclass.

From the 30th of June to the 7th of July, the week-long programme equipped participants with the knowledge and confidence to build resilient businesses capable of driving sustainable livelihoods and contributing to greener urban food systems. Designed to strengthen youth-led enterprises, the Masterclass took entrepreneurs through every stage of the business journey, from strategic planning and business modelling to digital marketing, branding, intellectual property protection, value addition, proposal writing, investment readiness, and the art of delivering persuasive business pitches.

Facilitated by a diverse team of industry experts, each session challenged participants to think beyond simply starting a business and instead focus on building enterprises that are innovative, competitive, and investment-ready. Along the way, they learned that

success is not determined by a good idea alone, but by the ability to protect it, communicate its value, access opportunities, and confidently present it to the world.

More importantly, the masterclass fostered a community of young entrepreneurs committed to learning from one another, exchanging ideas, and building networks that will continue long after the training ended. By the close of the programme, participants had gained far more than technical business skills, they had developed the confidence, mindset, and strategic thinking needed to transform ambition into action.

Through the Urban Futures Project, Green Governance Zimbabwe remains committed to investing in young entrepreneurs who are creating innovative solutions, strengthening sustainable urban food systems, and contributing to a greener, more resilient economy.

The masterclass may have ended, but for these 27 entrepreneurs, the journey of building businesses that create lasting social, economic, and environmental impact has only just begun.



Wishful Kaseke-Chibwinja sharing practical techniques on confident communication, professional grooming, and persuasive pitching, helping participants present their businesses with impact during the entrepreneurship masterclass.

VOICES OF IMPACT

The Entrepreneurship Masterclass transformed the way I think about growing **LAVMUD VENTURES**. One of the biggest takeaways for me was understanding what it takes to become export-ready. Learning about quality standards, certifications, and compliance showed me that expanding into international markets is achievable with the right preparation and strategic planning.

The sessions on intellectual property, business management, financial record-keeping, and pitching were equally impactful. I realised the importance of protecting our brand and innovations, maintaining sound financial

systems, and communicating our business value with confidence. The training challenged me to shift from focusing on day-to-day operations to building a business that is sustainable, scalable, and investment-ready.

Beyond the technical knowledge, the masterclass strengthened my confidence as an entrepreneur and gave me a clearer vision for the future of my business. I left with practical tools, renewed motivation, and a commitment to applying these lessons to create greater impact through sustainable agribusiness.



The Entrepreneurship Masterclass gave me the confidence to think beyond today's business challenges and prepare for tomorrow's opportunities. I'm grateful to Green Governance Zimbabwe for equipping us with practical knowledge that will help us grow LAVMUD VENTURES into a resilient and competitive agribusiness."

— **Lavender Mudiwa-Ziso**

Participant, Urban Futures Entrepreneurship Masterclass 2026



Climate change threatens food security

Climate change will exacerbate hunger and poverty for marginalized communities through disrupting means of access, availability and adequacy of food. Initiatives that promote equality, resilience and adaption are a matter of urgency.

#resiliencenow

POLICY & RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Beyond the Export Ban: Can Zimbabwe Turn Lithium Wealth into Sustainable Development?

Aerial view of the Bikita Minerals lithium mine in Masvingo Province, one of Zimbabwe's largest lithium mining operations and a key contributor to the country's growing role in the global energy transition.

Photo: Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG).



By Grace Maguire

As the world accelerates its transition to clean energy, lithium has become one of the most sought-after minerals of the 21st century. From electric vehicles and renewable energy storage to smartphones and laptops, the global demand for lithium continues to rise, placing mineral-rich countries like Zimbabwe at the centre of the global green transition.

For Zimbabwe, home to some of Africa's largest lithium deposits, this presents a rare opportunity—not only to increase export earnings but also to position itself as a key player in the global battery value chain. Yet beneath this economic promise lies a more complex question: Can Zimbabwe transform its mineral wealth into inclusive and sustainable development?

A Bold Shift Towards Value Addition

For decades, Zimbabwe exported raw minerals while much of the economic value was realised elsewhere through processing and manufacturing.

To change this trajectory, Government introduced restrictions on the export of unprocessed lithium before announcing a comprehensive ban on unbeneficiated lithium exports. The objective was clear: encourage local processing, stimulate industrialisation, attract investment, and ensure that Zimbabwe captures greater value from its own natural resources.

Early signs suggest that the policy is beginning to reshape the sector.

Several companies have committed significant investments towards local lithium processing facilities, while new processing plants are positioning Zimbabwe to move beyond being merely a supplier of raw materials to becoming an active participant in the global battery supply chain.

The policy represents an important step towards economic transformation by promoting local value addition, employment creation, and industrial development.

Economic Opportunity Must Benefit Communities

While the export ban has created new investment opportunities, it also highlights long-standing challenges within Zimbabwe's mining sector.

Communities living near mining operations continue to raise concerns over environmental degradation, land displacement, inadequate compensation, limited employment opportunities, and poor working conditions. Reports of water pollution, damaged infrastructure, and insufficient corporate accountability demonstrate that economic growth alone does not automatically translate into improved livelihoods.

If Zimbabwe's lithium industry is to contribute meaningfully to national development, the benefits of mineral extraction must extend beyond export earnings to the communities that host mining activities.

A truly successful mining sector should create decent jobs, protect the environment, strengthen local economies, and improve the quality of life for surrounding communities.

Lessons from Chile

Zimbabwe is not alone in confronting these challenges.

Chile, one of the world's leading lithium producers—has similarly sought to maximise national benefits from its mineral wealth through greater state participation and strategic investment in value addition.

Although Chile continues to face environmental challenges associated with lithium extraction, its experience demonstrates the importance of combining resource governance with strong public institutions, environmental safeguards, and community participation.

For Zimbabwe, the lesson is clear: policy reforms are most effective when accompanied by transparent governance, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and mechanisms that ensure mining revenues contribute to national and local development.

The Road Ahead

Zimbabwe's lithium export policy represents a significant shift in how the country approaches its mineral resources. By encouraging domestic processing and industrialisation, it challenges the traditional model of exporting raw materials with limited local benefit.

However, the long-term success of this strategy will depend on more than increased investment.

It will require stronger environmental regulation, improved labour protections, transparent revenue management, meaningful community consultation, and greater corporate accountability.

As global demand for critical minerals continues to grow, Zimbabwe has an opportunity to demonstrate that the energy transition can be both economically transformative and socially inclusive.

The ultimate measure of success will not simply be the number of tonnes exported or processing plants constructed—it will be whether Zimbabwe's mineral wealth improves the lives of its people while protecting the natural environment upon which future generations depend.

"Zimbabwe's lithium should power more than the global energy transition—it should also power inclusive development, resilient communities, and a greener future at home."

Lithium by the Numbers

Global demand

Demand for lithium is expected to increase by more than 350% by 2040, driven largely by electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies.

Zimbabwe's Advantage

Zimbabwe hosts Africa's largest hard-rock lithium reserves, including the globally significant Bikita Mine.

Value Addition

The export ban seeks to increase local beneficiation, processing, and manufacturing to maximise economic returns within Zimbabwe.

A Sustainable Future

Responsible mining requires balancing economic growth with environmental protection, community wellbeing, and transparent governance.



About the Author

Grace Maguire is an International Relations and Environmental Studies student at Tufts University (USA). She is currently undertaking an internship with Green Governance Zimbabwe, where her research focuses on environmental governance, climate policy, and sustainable natural resource management.



The pursuit of a just energy transition: Africa's Paradox

By: Frank Mpahlo

Fossil energy is dirty. Its continued use is making an already bad situation worse. That humanity needs to grow its technology beyond reliance on fossil fuels is obvious in the face of the debilitating effects of their contribution to the vagaries of climate change. Industries across the world need urgent decarbonisation and transition to clean energy – and fast! What is under debate are the modalities of the transition. They have to be reasonable. Just too.

The concept of a just transition — that the shift to a sustainable economy must be a shared global responsibility, that its benefits must be distributed fairly and that communities should not be worse off as a result — is particularly important in the African context. Africa is at a crossroads. The continent's transition away from fossil fuels is fraught with difficulties and there arises the dialogue for a fair and just transition. The continent accounts for just 3.8% of global greenhouse emissions, yet it is bearing the brunt of some of the worst impacts of climate change.

In this light, while developed economies are prioritizing reducing carbon emissions, African countries are still grappling with accessing affordable energy. Philippe Valahu, CEO of Private Infrastructure Development Group, an infrastructure-focused development and finance organisation that works in developing economies, was recently quoted by The Banker noting that more than half a billion people do not have access to electricity. "This is a continent where more than 500 million people don't have access to electricity. To give a more specific statistic, that includes almost 60% of medical clinics not having access to a regular source of electricity. So, there are some massive needs," Valahu said.

Zimbabwe is particularly in a catch-22 scenario with regards to balancing "cleanness" and accessibility of energy as well as leveraging on fossil fuel for economic development. The country is presently celebrating the discovery of huge reserves of fossil fuels which is characterized by billion-dollar investments in its coal-powered electricity generation plants in Sengwa, Gokwe. Similarly, the Southern African nation is also basking in the pride of Oil and Gas discoveries within the Muzarabani escapement. This clearly sets it apart from other countries in the global south, at least on a national level.

Fossil fuels may be dirty, but they have the potential to completely transform the small southern African country's economy and meet its socio-economic obligations to millions of its citizens who need social security protection and jobs as it battles over 80 percent unemployment and deepening poverty. Fossil fuels have allowed most developed countries to grow their economies and attain the levels of development they are currently enjoying albeit at a huge cost to the environment. This transformative power is beyond question when one looks at the Middle East where plain deserts have been transformed into mega-cities. Ordering an indiscriminate ban on fossil fuel across the globe would be good for the environment but catastrophic to billions of people in the Global South where the majority of the poor are.

Besides deterring the countries that are still discovering fossil deposits from raking in billions in energy sales, transitioning to renewable energy comes at a cost and most developing countries can ill-afford it.

At a more local level, the falling prices of renewable energy solutions have shown their potential for a successful energy transition and electrification of Global South countries. The increasing affordability of decentralised renewable energy solutions and solar home systems is an indication of this.

This opportunity is however not being fully utilised. Lack of appropriate and affordable financing options for people most marginalised is a key challenge, stresses Catherine Adelman, founder of Fosera an off-grid solar company which designs and manufactures Pic-Solar-Home-Systems for rural electrification. By creating reasonable financing schemes for individuals and small-holder farmers as well as subsidies for the most vulnerable groups developing countries can support the energy transition in rural areas and contribute to local economic development, Adelman argues.

But the argument of renewable energy as cheaper is not entirely unanimous and beyond dispute. The poor often bear the larger cost of energy with electricity and transportation increases constitute a large portion of their expenses than the wealthier. During a Dialogue and Exchange Program on Understanding our role in Climate Justice hosted by the American Friends Service Committee, Olivia Hanks from Quakers in Britain posits that turning to alternative energies is already hurting the poor in Spain and Germany with rising taxes and electricity costs as governments remove subsidies from fossil fuels according to environmentalist.

"The fact is that electricity prices are rising and investing in renewables requires more funding that must come from taxes or carbon credit investment but that too is a tax. Already economies of Spain and Germany are severely hurt from this investment, and my point is the poor pay the brunt of that," said Hanks. She argues that huge investments in renewable energy has driven up the cost of energy despite the appearance of it appearing cheaper which she notes is because of the work of lobbyists.

"Anything can through lobbying effort and bias be made to look cheaper but the fact that electricity prices have risen substantially in the countries that have invested heavily in renewables is the proof in the pudding and shows the best representation of the true facts. "Investing more will only aggravate the situation even more and the disparity between the percentage of income spent on energy by the poor," Hanks said. A balanced approach to energy transition that incorporates every factor and pays particular attention to the poor in developing countries in the Global South would ensure a just shift. This may need to be done with great care and in stages to ensure that the pursuit for clean energy does not undermine Africa's ability to meet its equally important sustainable development goals.



DID YOU KNOW?

Africa Contributes LESS THAN

4% OF GLOBAL
GREENHOUSE
GAS EMISSIONS

yet bears some of the greatest
impacts of climate change



A just **Energy Transition** ensure the move to clean energy is **fair, inclusive** and **people-centred**, creating jobs, expanding **affordable energy access** and **protecting communities** while accelerating climate action







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