



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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To: The News Editor

STATEMENT ON THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM) / PERFORMANCE REPORT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN MINING OPERATIONS UNDER THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINING DEVELOPMENT

The VFM/Performance Audit Report on the Management of Occupational Health and Safety in Mining Operations by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development is out.

The audit was conducted following press reports highlighting poor occupational health and safety in mining operations. Six provinces were covered namely; Mashonaland East, West and Central, Matabeleland North and South as well as the Midlands.

The purpose of the audit was to examine the efficiency and effectiveness with which the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development (MMMD) was carrying out its mandate. One of the ministry's main functions is to enforce Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in mining operations. The legal framework which regulates health and safety in mining operations is the Mines and Minerals Act [Chapter 21:05], Statutory Instrument 72 of 1989-Explosive Regulations, Statutory Instrument 109 of 1990-Mining (Management and Safety) Regulations, Mining (Health and Sanitation Regulations) and the Zimbabwe National Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

My pre-audit study revealed that the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development was not adequately monitoring Occupational Health and Safety in mining operations, thus, breeding non-compliance by mining operators resulting in high fatal accidents and contraction of diseases in small to medium scale mines. It was therefore not surprising that the media was awash with reports of accidents and deaths in these mining operations.

OHS is the discipline that deals with the prevention of injuries, diseases and fatalities at the workplace as well as the promotion and protection of health and safety of workers including

contracted personnel, visitors and any other person in the workplace. It also refers to the adherence to regulations to ensure the elimination of accidents and incidents, monitoring and control of noise, vibration and radiation as well as monitoring land, air and water quality in mining environments.

Audit Findings

My audit revealed that the Ministry was not adequately monitoring OHS in mining operations, creating a high risk of non-compliance and failure to maintain a safe and healthy environment, thus, endangering the lives of mine workers. The Mining Engineering Charter stipulates the Ministry should conduct annual inspections at least three times for large scale mines, twice for medium scale and once for small scale. My audit noted the following:

- The Ministry's records did not have a database of mining claims contrary to stipulations in the Mines and Mineral Act [*Chapter 21:05*] making it difficult for it to come up with inspection schedules and enforce OHS regulations. Plans to develop one had not materialised since 2012 and the Ministry relied on mining registration cards and monthly revenue returns for information on existent mining operations.
- There were inadequate motor vehicles for operations and no testing and disaster recovery equipment at the Ministry. Though work plans indicated that each provincial inspectorate needed a minimum of four vehicles to function, all provincial offices had one vehicle for operations at the time of audit.
- The Ministry's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan did not prioritise OHS, as it had no goals and budget allocation for it. Of the six provinces visited, only Mataberland South had planned to conduct inspections.
- There was inadequate monitoring and enforcement of OHS as it averaged a minute coverage of 1.32 % per province. Mostly, small and medium scale mines were not complying with the mining regulations and the Ministry was failing to conduct routine inspections as per its Department of Mining Engineering Charter. This resulted in the improper handling and storage of explosives, non-compliance to the provision of PPE to mine workers, non-availability of accidents and complaints registers and non-compliance to regular medical checkups on mine workers at small and medium scale mining operations. Mine workers at 37 of the 51 mines visited were not provided with adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at small and medium scale miners. The provision of these was erratic even for staff at the Ministry of Mines who relied on supplies from mining operators to inspect underground mining activities.
- Small and medium scale mines did not have risk assessment policies and programmes. In fact the mine managers at these operations were not fully acquainted with the health and safety regulations as required by law.
- Ministry inspectors were unable to conduct tests on critical aspects such as gas content, lighting and ventilation in mining working environments. This carried the risk that mining operators could alter their test results for fear of losing their mining licences. Medium and small scale mines did not have these critical testing equipment regardless of the requirement for them to conduct regular tests. This exposed mine workers to hazardous working environments.

- The Midlands Province had a parallel structure running with some of the Ministry of Mines duties under the banner Shurugwi District ZIM-ASSET. This organisation was illegally collecting annual registration fees from 1 700 claims which totalled \$152 000 in 2017, depriving government of the much needed revenue.

Audit recommendations

The implementation of the following recommendations by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development will promote a safe and healthy environment in the medium to small scale mining sector. The ministry of Mines should consider implementing the following:

- Improve monitoring and enforcement of OHS compliance by mining operations and prioritise OHS in its budget allocation and work plans. It should also develop and maintain an up to date database to monitor, supervise and account for mining operations.
- Standardise inspection plans and avail adequate motor vehicles for routine inspections to ensure improved compliance to OHS regulations by mining operators.
- Ensure mine managers undergo comprehensive OHS training especially in the small to medium scale mines where Safety and Health Officers (SHE) who should enforce mining management and safety regulations might not be appointed. The development of small to medium scale miners' guidelines will enhance applicability and compliance by these.
- Prioritise acquisition of testing and disaster management equipment for its inspectors for testing various variables and assist in the event of a disaster.

This Report was tabled in Parliament on the 7th of October, 2020 and is now a public document and can be accessed from the Office's website [www. auditgen.gov.zw](http://www.auditgen.gov.zw).

Attached to this press release is the Report on the Management of Occupational Health and Safety in Mining Operations by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development for further information.

For more information or clarification contact the undersigned.

Pretty Moyo

Head of Public Relations

0242-702826/ 0717 208 176