

**IMPRESSIONS OF THE ZAMBIAN NORTH WEST PROVINCE MINING AREA
FIVE YEARS ON (Sept. 2019 to Daily Mail).**

Margaret O'Callaghan, an Australian who was UNFPA representative to Zambia from 1998-2005, has been associated with Zambia's North West province since the early 2000s. Her UN work there happened to coincide with the start-up of what became a mining boom which transformed parts of the province from being a quiet rural backwater into a vibrant and important part of Zambia's economy.

Margaret returned to the NW in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to research and document the impact of three major mines (Kansanshi and Kalumbila (First Quantum) and Lumwana (Barrick Gold) and the other mining-associated activities going on. A comprehensive document entitled 'Copperfields' was prepared and is currently awaiting publication. It describes the many and varied developments and changes which had occurred and the lessons which were apparent from the often stressful and challenging experiences of the first decade.

In mid-2019 she returned to the provincial capital Solwezi and the surrounding areas for the first time in five years. She was curious to see how the situation there had evolved as people adjusted to living in a world now dominated by mining activities. These were her impressions of the developments which had occurred by the second decade of the mining boom which had commenced around 2002. They mostly focus on the situation in Solwezi town but also include mention of some of the developments further west:

The most obvious change was the dramatic increase in **population**, even greater than that which was evident in 2014. This was clearly apparent at the main market area and from the extent of housing which has now spread widely over the surrounding hills and also increased in density. The government/German aid 2016 estimate of about a quarter of a million in the urban area appears to be about right and will be clarified by next year's census. This figure is a huge increase from the 2000 Census figure of 70,863, being due not just to the large mining-job seeking influx from outside the province but also to natural growth. The extent of the influx also clearly showed in the impact on both the education and health services which have been over-whelmed by the increased demands.

The second impression was that the activity of the mines has encouraged and enabled much **commercial activity**, with a plethora of shopping malls and small, medium and large industrial businesses having greatly increased over the past five years. The presence of large-scale brick making, milling and other factories, mechanical/engineering businesses, home goods and hardware shops, along with the thriving transport and hospitality industries clearly illustrate an expanding economy. There was even a movie theatre now, as well as coffee shops and an ice-cream parlour which is amazing to someone who knew the town in its earlier years. Solwezi town was modernizing! The presence of the new supermarkets was also breaking the monopoly held by the old Shoprite for so many years and hopefully bringing down the price of goods. The only surprise was that most of these developments hadn't occurred in the first decade of the mining boom. But it was sad to hear that some were experiencing difficulties in establishing small business ventures.

Another aspect of this increasing commercialization was that aimed at meeting the greatly increased demand for **food**, both packaged items and farm produce. It was good to hear stories about many local farmers benefiting from the greatly increased demand from supermarkets, hotels and lodges and to the mines. The town markets also clearly

demonstrated a roaring trade of cheaper products for the less well-off. Such an increase in production may have been reducing the share which had long been provided by South African suppliers who have done so well from the NW mining boom (including, and especially, for non-food items). However, there is still much untapped potential for local farmers to up-scale their production and capitalize on the demand. But it was said that many were struggling to do so for various reasons, including the state of rural roads, transport affordability and the high cost of bank loans for irrigation systems and the like.

On a more positive note was apparent that Solwezi now has a **middle class** with disposable incomes, which never existed before. This group included the local elite, who because of their positions, were able to take advantage of the opportunities occurring as the town opened up. It also included newcomers who came with business know-how and cash.

Another development, obviously related to the increase in incomes, was that the **housing construction** industry had evolved well beyond the building of modest termite mound brick structures. The industry has upscaled with the construction of many more medium and high standard houses, and some industrial buildings. These developments had created not only a large demand for building materials but also for glossy floor tiles and other modern house fittings and furniture (again mostly supplied from South Africa). However, there were still many issues related to plots and their planning, or lack there-of, including their allocation, disputes over ownership and, often, their lack of basic services. But it was good to hear that some progress had been made in increasing access to town water supplies.

In terms of town **infra-structure** an improvement was the widening and re-sealing of the main road through the centre of the provincial capital Solwezi, albeit at a cost to the roadside shops' parking spaces. But its smooth state was a huge contrast to the majority of township roads. Apart from a few major arteries into the compounds the rest were rough 'goat' tracks, many difficult to drive along even in the dry season and which must be a nightmare in the wet. Away from the main road Solwezi's earlier reputation as being a shanty town still remained true. Another road issue was the terrible condition of what should be a major highway to the Congo, which, if sealed, has great potential to improve the ease of doing business with this close neighbour. Given the extent of demand for Zambian produce over the border it is a mystery as to why government didn't make the Congo Road a priority years ago. Even Tanzanian traders found it profitable to use this route.

Another positive development was that as a result of the large increase in commercial activity there were now many **more job opportunities** outside the mine for those who had rushed into town in the first decade but who had often failed to obtain the fabled mine work. However, many of these positions, such as shop assistants, waiters, cleaners, taxi drivers, labourers and houseworkers were poorly paid and non-unionized. Unfortunately, in a country where unemployment is so high, people don't risk complaining.

One obvious improvement was the recent opening of the new multi-story Council building and it was hoped that now staff are better accommodated they are also more adequately resourced to perform the challenging tasks of dealing with the multiple and urgent needs of a burgeoning town. However, it was wondered if Council members were now better skilled to a level more appropriate to addressing the needs of a modern town and district which was host to three major mines (and others) and which consequently was a major contributor to the national treasury.

It was good to hear that it was thought that there had been some **decline in the cost of living** from its previously over-heated state (i.e. equal to that in Lusaka), especially in terms of the price of hospitality rooms and house rentals. This latter situation appeared to indicate that things were normalizing because the housing boom had helped to meet the previously urgent demands for accommodation. Such a decrease would be a bonus for tenants but those people who rushed to build rental accommodation, often in their own gardens, would have found their income somewhat reduced. Some lodge owners may now also be feeling the pinch.

Some serious issues were clearly apparent: Tree removal for charcoal, logging and brick burning has obviously accelerated to meet a growing demand which does not bode well for the state of the local environment. But the lack of and/or cost of electricity means that people resort to charcoal. Corruption was still reported to be widespread and undermining good governance while legal disputes over land and Chieftdoms were still prevalent and disruptive to community relations. In addition, it was disappointing to hear that delays and disruptions to, or denials of sensible company proposals which would help improve the town were reported to be continuing. One can only wonder why this was so.

There are also still many under-or not employed who constitute a very needy population, especially if they have left their farms and/or their family support networks behind. But the harsh reality was that there can never be enough jobs for everyone in a country at Zambia's stage of development.

It was also apparent that, away from the urban developments, life largely went on as it did before the mining boom. The exception would be, perhaps, for those who have managed to become involved in meeting the increased demand for agricultural products and construction items such as sand and aggregate (and timber). To be realistic here too, it is likely to take decades for significant economic improvements to extend through rural areas, for reasons including culture, geography and inadequate service provision. The positive economic impact of a mining boom can only spread so far and those mostly likely to be able to reap its benefits are those who are already at least somewhat advantaged.

The other two major mine related areas, **Manyama and Kisasa**, have also experienced significant population growth over the past five year, for reasons which weren't entirely clear. Was it just the hope of mine employment spreading along the highway or due to something else? The number of small shops clustered along the highway has multiplied, perhaps ten-fold, with their communities, it is thought, mostly being made up of non-locals. Because of the lack of re-emptive management by government both suffer from being crowded and unplanned, with usually low-quality housing and minimal and over-stretched services. Both Lumwana and Kalumbila mining companies tried to prevent these situations from occurring but their efforts were largely rejected by government. Now the situation has worsened although one could hope (perhaps in vain) that the establishment of the new Kalumbila Council at Manyama might help improve the situation. But the fact is that the 'horse has well and truly bolted' in both places.

In contrast, the new **Kalumbila town**, which is situated away from the highway and closer to the mine site, presents a very different picture. Now about five years old, the impressive facility was carved out of the bush by the mining company with well laid out, sealed streets, modern housing and basic services and facilities, and still well treed. It is a clean and pleasant place to live. But it is not cheap and only those in well-paid jobs can afford to live

there. Others less well-off, such as drivers and labourers, tend to live in Kisasa or the Northern resettlement area or in a community village. Another development in the middle of the bush has been the establishment of a \$50 million dollar mining ball mill factory. This modern factory was the first project to take off in the Multi-Economic Zone facility which has been planned in order to expand the North West's industrial base and increase employment opportunities. The surprising appearance of a modern town and factory in the bush were signs of the North West moving into a new era if issues like provision of land title and power supplies can be sorted out.

It wasn't possible to visit the other smaller mine developments such as in the Kasempa, Mfumbwe and Mwinilunga areas (which are much more out of the public eye) but they are also affected by mine impact and need to have more light shed on them.

A different aspect of the mining boom arose because of the **lack of a railway**. The alternative has been the trucking industry and it now plays a key role as all mineral products (and other goods) have to be carted by road to and from ports in Tanzania, South Africa, or most recently, Walvis Bay in Namibia. This impact has taken a different form from that described above – it is narrow, linear and intermittent and spreads much further than just through North West province. The impact of the hundreds of trucks thundering past villages and towns passed on the various routes does not seem to have been documented. But such heavy and fast-moving traffic obviously has some effects and it is hardly likely to be positive, unless when drivers stop and buy food and drinks, and maybe fuel, if they do. The wear and tear on the roads is also obvious in many places, including dangerous moulding of the tarmac in places where trucks slow down. Damage to the road surfaces invariably worsens over time, unless constant maintenance is being practiced, which is often not the case. Another truck related issue is that associated with lengthy hold-ups at the major border crossings which have long been known to increase the potential for spread of HIV infections. Also, Zambia has had a strong prevention programme in place for two decades but neighbouring countries, including DRC, have not to the same extent, which adds to the potentially risky scenario. There are strong arguments both ways to be debated about whether rail or trucking is the most socio-friendly and economic mode of transport during a mining boom, as discussed in the forthcoming 'Copperfields'.

Another aspect of a mining story well into its second decade occurs largely out of the public eye (but is obvious to neighbouring communities). The extent of Kansanshi **mine expansion** to the east and the spread of mine tailings has increased significantly over the past five years. This is the harsh reality of some fourteen years of mining, and the major (and largely ignored) cost of permitting any mining to take place. Such damage has been obvious for many decades on the Copperbelt and now appears to be taken for granted (and even re-mined) but the damage is real. However, the good news that modern technology and science are contributing to improving methods of reducing and negating such damage and that the three big mines do take monitoring very seriously. The situation is similar in the other two major mine areas, albeit to a lesser extent because they started later.

Given that the North West is Zambia's major watershed and it experiences a long and heavy wet season it is obviously essential that Government should fund a very regular programme of monitoring in order to be able to determine if any pollution of local water, air and soils is occurring beyond the mine site. It is also important that such monitoring should be

undertaken by independent international experts as it is doubtful if ZEMA has the resources or independence to undertake this vital task.

Which brings me to **the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) role of the mining**

companies: It is clear from observing, talking to communities and others and reading that all three companies have continued and even expanded their very extensive programmes of CSR assistance over the past five years. Millions of dollars' worth of inputs have been contributed by all three large mines – and incidentally, involving the employment of many Zambians. A multitude of activities are addressing local priority issues, including roads, literacy, school attendance, health and education facilities, agricultural productivity, gender inequities, business capacity, cultural activities and emergency assistance. It is a never-ending list of activities aimed at contributing to bettering the conditions of people's lives around the mines, and sometimes beyond. It is also apparent that companies are clearly being seen as 'the new developers', in many cases with government largely getting off scot-free from fulfilling many of its own responsibilities - despite the massive amounts of mining taxes contributed to the national treasury. The bottom line is that no mining company can or should be solely responsible for local development – that is primarily government's responsibilities. It is also very unclear about where a company's CSR boundaries should lie, especially when there is a large influx of 'outsiders' present. It is also apparent that the North West has never been allocated a percentage of national resources commensurate with its greatly increased population – which could have helped the mining areas to better more effectively developed.

A final word: In many respects Solwezi town appears to have settled into its new role as a busy, nationally important mining town despite many rough edges still being apparent. The chaos of the first decade looks like it has at least partly been left behind. Local people appear to have adapted, or at least resigned themselves to the changed circumstances, including a much faster pace of life and the invasion of many 'outsiders'.

The harsh reality is that while Solwezi town has modernized somewhat it is largely 'the rich who have got richer'. A few have managed to uplift themselves (see box) but most of the poor have stayed largely as they were. But given the broader Zambian socio-economic and political context it would be unrealistic to expect more widespread and deep-set improvements. This is especially so given the extent of the population influx into the North West and government, which is ultimately responsible for development, obviously having its priorities focussed elsewhere.

Despite the dreams of local people a mining boom cannot create miracles.

Case Study below.

A Local Good News Case Study from Kansanshi Mine Area:



A Transformation in Five years.

Selesty Kayumba was born in a rural area of Solwezi District, where, because his parents were poor, he was only able to complete Form Five at the local school. However, some years later, he was able to obtain training at the Christian Mission in Many Lands school and then worked for the church for ten years.

Selesty then became involved with the mine neighbouring Mbonge and Ngombe communities' struggle to be compensated and relocated as a result of the Kansanshi mine revival and expansion, especially during the period 2012-14. Due to his leadership he became a Community Liaison officer, to help resolve the issues.

This community work led to him becoming known to company staff who recognized that he was reliable and conscientious. He was able to increase his knowledge about sub-contracting by participating in training opportunities provided by the company, including learning how to register as a small company, manage labour and finances and how to bid. He was consequently increasingly able to obtain sub-contracts for various jobs around the mine site and at Kabitaka housing estate, including gardening, cleaning, electrical work, maintenance and fencing.

Gradually he built up a team of about sixty, using local people and a few others who had the technical skills needed which local people did not possess. He also trained up his previously unskilled local staff and became recognized as a reliable emerging local contractor.

The end result was that members of the local communities benefitted from the employment opportunities and ceased to complain about not being able to participate in the mining developments on what had been their former land. He has also continued his own education by attending a training course on construction run by the National Construction and Engineering Institute in Lusaka.

Five years ago the man I knew as a community worker has transformed into a busy businessman, with the phone constantly ringing. He was able to do this because of the opportunities provided by the company CSR programme and also his own hard work and dedication. This has enabled him to build further on his community development skills. Aply supported by his wife Winfridah who supplies vegetables to mining companies, he has in turn helped to enable more of his own people to become income earners and to develop their skills.