



An Ubuntu-Christocentric Comparison of Gold Mine Companies and the Zama Zama Enterprise in the West Rand District Municipality

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Abstract

The recent mass rape of eight women from a team shooting a music video on an unused gold mine dump near West Village, in Mogale City, in the West Rand District Municipality, of Gauteng Province, South Africa sparked a national outcry about Gender-based Violence (GBV) in the country. The men who gang-raped the women are called *zama zamas* (loosely translated 'trying to attain luck'). The incident has raised two disturbing developments in the post-1994 South African context. First, statistics show that 1100 women were sexually violated in the first three months of 2022 in South Africa. The current president of the country, Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, declared GBV a national pandemic in his Covid-19 pandemic speech. Second, it also reminded the nation about the trend of business enterprises placing profit at the expense of poor and vulnerable workers. The article focuses on the second development by applying two Ubuntu values and a Christocentric approach to compare gold mine companies and the *zama zama* enterprises in the region. It also concludes by proposing an alternative to the problem of illegal gold mining in the region.

Keywords: gold mining companies; *zama zama*, syndicate leaders, caring, empathy.

Introduction

One musician penned a song titled, "*Ke tswa Randfontein dikomponeng*" translated "I am from the mining compounds of Randfontein." The song is about a mine worker who narrates that he was from Randfontein, the gold mining area, returning home and surprisingly found another man sleeping in his house (*ka fitlhela mpara e robetse*). It also points to the migrant labour system and the mining houses employed to recruit men to work in the gold and other mines (Wilson, 1972:8).

The discovery of gold in Johannesburg, east and west of Johannesburg and Orange Free State (Viljoen, 2009:131) created the need for cheap labour to produce the precious mineral. By 1970, forty-two mines were operating in these areas (Wilson, 1972:8). According to Wilson (1972:8), many men were recruited from the country and neighbouring countries to work in these mines. These represented two-thirds of men working in the mining industry (Wilson, 1972:7). Western Deep Level and West Driefontein were among the four largest gold mines in the area (Wilson, 1972:8-9). The first mine that operated in 1939 in then Venterspost, now part current Rand West City Local Municipality, is Venterspost (Wilson, 1972:9). Between 1939 and 1966, nine mines were operating in the Far West Rand, current West Rand District Municipality (Wilson, 1972:9). The recruited men were accommodation in men only buildings called compounds or hostels, (*dikompone* mentioned in the above song), and segregated according to tribal groups according to the Bantu Urban Areas Act No.25 of 1945(Wilson 1972:31,33). Wilson, 1972:10 states:



The compounds which house the other 90% of the labour force vary from old pre-first World War buildings with rooms housing 50 or more men living like sardines in double-decker concrete bunks to modern hostels housing between 12 and 20 men in dormitories that compare not unfavourably with those of a white boarding school. Washing facilities are available in the form of showers with hot and cold water and there are large sinks for washing clothes. In compounds built before 1939 beds are not supplied and men either sleep on the concrete bunks or they have to make, or buy from their predecessors, wooden beds specially designed to fit the short bunks...Food, provided by the mines is scientifically chosen to provide a balanced diet... and of a quality such that most men leave the mines physically fitter than when they arrived

It is difficult to date the emergence of the *zama zamas*, except to mention that they are estimated to be about 30 000 (Capel 2017), a spill-over of the closure of gold mines after reaching their lifespan (Magadzu, 2021: 19), downsizing (Williams, 2019: 22) and some closed due to powerful unions demanding unmet wage increases for their members¹. There are over 6000 closed mines (including gold mines) in South Africa (Cornelissen, Watson, Adam & Malefetse in Magadzu, 2021:16). Williams (2019:23) states that “[according to the Chamber of Mines (2016) the South African mining industry has lost roughly 50 000 jobs over the last ten years, mostly from the gold industry and with the prospect of more to come.” Many workers recruited from the country and neighbouring countries did not return home, opting instead to stay in surrounding townships to find other sources of income. One way is to use their work experience to engage in illicit gold production and sell it to potential buyers on the black market (Williams, 2019: 26, 28). Macheke (2018,220) explains:

The gold which the *Zama Zamas* extract is sold in the informal settlements (*imikhukhu*) where a gram of gold fetches R420 and each individual can make as much as R42 000 on a good day. At times the grams of gold are sent with omalayitsha to Zimbabwe and sold in US dollars if the Rand is weak in South Africa but it depends on the exchange rate

The production of illicit gold placed them at the mercy of syndicates that operate/d illegal gold production in the Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City. This operation also included recruiting other men from poverty-stricken areas and from the neighbouring countries. Consequently, two gold production producers, one legal and one illegal, co-exist in Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City. Williams (2019:12) helps to differentiate the two producers by mentioning that “[i]n the South African context, illegal mining can thus be defined as the any mining activity that operates outside the legal framework of the country.”

Additionally, Crowley (2014) mentions that poverty, unemployment and illegal immigrants all contribute to the rise of illegal mining in South Africa. The following quotation describes the livelihood of the *zama zamas*:

I am not an illegal gold miner but I run a Spaza shop that sells food to the *Zama Zamas* underground. Most of the goods I sell underground are expensive because they reflect the cost of bringing them underground. The other issue is that I also pay entrance fees to security guards. A loaf of bread costs R100, a 2 litre cool drink bottle cost R150 and a cigarette can cost up to R20 including a match stick (Macheke, 2018:219)

¹ The author has been living in Mohlakeng township from birth to date. His maternal grandfather and paternal grandfather were recruited to work in the gold mines in Randfontein and Krugersdorp. He is also interacting with former and current employees in the mines. Some are church members; some community members and one is pastor. He has witnessed the *zama zamas* move and work publicly in the mine dumps in Matholeville (next to Davidsonville (Roodepoort)), along the main reef road from Randfontein to Johannesburg (R41) and along R28 between Randfontein and Magale City. He is also aware of the closure of mines in Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City (formerly known as Randfontein Westonaria, Krugersdorp and Carletonville).



Hence, the article first applies two Ubuntu values and a Christocentric approach to show that the hidden illegal gold mining syndicate leaders as well the gold mining companies and their shareholders and the management benefit(ed) at the expense of poor and vulnerable workers. Second, it concludes with the suggestion of an Ubuntu-Christocentric alternative to illegal mining in the region and elsewhere where people are exploited.

Research method

The *zama zamas* in Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City are a largely African men from the country and neighbouring states such as Lesotho, Malawi, Eswatini and Mozambique. They operate openly and sell their gold output to secret buyers or hand the gold output to their secret employers. Since they operate in African township communities, it is necessary to approach their enterprise from an African worldview. Hence, the use of the Ubuntu values of care and sharing (Mzondi, 2009:50–51; 2015:153–154); and Christ's teachings are added to compare gold mine companies and the *zama zama* enterprises in the region. The teachings are loving your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:25-29), warning of greed (coveting) (Mark 7: 22), protecting the weak and vulnerable (Mark 6:34), and the mammon versus God (Matthew 6:24). The first teaching was mentioned when a religious leader asked Jesus about the greatest commandment and Jesus used a parable of the Good Samaritan to emphasise his teaching of loving your neighbour as yourself (Busse, 2005:84–86). The other three teachings were mentioned to the then audiences to teach them about observing Jewish regulations based on Levitical laws (Hobson,2008:70). These call for demonstrating love and providing for the physical needs of others (Gundry, 2011: loc 6:34) and a teaching about displaying loyalty (Guelich, 1982:332). The article combines the two Ubuntu values with Christ's teachings and calls it an Ubuntu-Christocentric approach. A Christocentric (Peppler, 2012) approach elevates the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, and refers to the teachings and praxis of Jesus in the Gospels. It noted that Chapell (1994:292) cautions against arguing that everything in the Bible is about Jesus. A Christocentric approach argues that:

theology must begin with Jesus Christ, and not with general principles, however better, or, at any rate, more relevant and illuminating they may appear to be: as though He were a continuation of the knowledge and Word of God, and not its root and origin, not indeed the very Word of God itself (Barth, 1957: II.2.p. fn. 4)

The article then uses the above-mentioned teachings of Christ as hermeneutical tools to compare the gold mine and the *zama zama* enterprises and continues to apply the above two Ubuntu values to do the same. Accordingly, this comparison intends to demonstrate that the former and current legal gold mining houses and the current illegal gold mining syndicate leaders (henceforth referred as gold syndicate leaders) all benefit at the expense of the poor and vulnerable men recruited to working in their enterprises.

The *zama zama* enterprise in the region

The *zama zama* operations Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City have been linked to the closure of gold mines in the region and to a change in mine ownership (Magadzu, 2021:19; SA People, 2022). Billions of Rand obtained through to illegal gold mining (Macheka, 2018:19) benefit the new "shareholders" (the hidden illegal gold mining syndicate leaders). Williams (2019: 27) explains that "[t]o gain entry into the shafts, the illegal miners will either bribe or sneak their way into an existing mine or blast open shaft entries which have been sealed with concrete." Macheka (2018:219) adds that: "The disused mines are deep such that *Zama Zamas* walk and crawl in small tunnels for about 1.5 to 2 kilometres to get to the gold reefs. Sometimes *zama zamas* can live underground for up to 2 months manually digging gold deposits."

The gold syndicate leaders use the mining house approach to recruit men from the country and the neighbouring countries to provide the required cheap labour. The men are called *zama zamas* loosely translated 'trying to attain luck'. *Zama* is an *isiNguni* word meaning "those who



try their luck' to earn a living" (Macheka, 2018: 219). It also means *zama impilo* (trying to attain human flourishing).

There are three categories of the *zama zamas*, those smuggled to work underground in official gold mine shafts and those operating in closed gold mine dumps and shafts. A newspaper report suggests a third group of *zama zamas* exist, the self-employed *zama zamas* (Virgo, 2022). The third group also seek to benefit from illegal gold mining activities and mention that they use the proceeds of their endeavours in the South African economy

These men work in extremely dangerous conditions, far worse than those found gold mining companies, and live in worse conditions than the mines provide. The recent media pictures of arrested *zama zamas* in Kagiso and Mohlakeng show their appalling working and living conditions (EWN, 2022; Magubani, 2022). The arrested men are foreign nationals from neighbouring countries (Timeslive 2022; Sibanda, 2022). Unlike the miners who were legally recruited from since the start of the gold rush in the 1880s, these are illegally recruited and work illegally to produce gold for gold syndicate leaders (Williams, 2019:26-27).

Their illegal activities have led the Prime Minister of Lesotho to apologise to President Cyril Ramaphosa for the activities of his citizens in South Africa (Mohloboli, 2022). His apology follows media reports that the men who gang-raped the women in an unused gold mine dump near West Village, in Mogale City, in the West Rand District Municipality, of Gauteng Province, South Africa were dressed in Basotho blankets and wore balaclavas (Dlamini, 2022). Similar reports stated that some of these foreign nationals were arrested in Kagiso after the community raided them. The premier of Gauteng, David Makhura, confirmed that most of the *zama zamas* were indeed from Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Patel, 2022).

Ubuntu-Christocentric comparison

Ubuntu has been translated as human nature (Ramose, 2006: 15) and is considered a way of life that promotes values such as caring, sharing and *seriti/isithunzi* (moral strength). Sebedi (1998:63) emphasised that one's action determine how a person is judged as acceptable or unacceptable, resulting in labelling a person *ke motho* (s/he is a person) if one displays acceptable actions or *ga se motho* (s/he is not a person) if one display unacceptable actions (Bhengu, 1996:27). Human behaviour also reflects an individual's moral standing in a community (Mzondi, 2009: 50). Christ also highlights that one's actions could display if one: loves a neighbour as self (Luke 10:25-29), is protecting the weak and vulnerable (Mark 6:34), driven by the love of money (Matthew 6:24) has greed that flows from their heart (Mark 7: 22).

Caring, loving your neighbour as self and protecting the weak and vulnerable

Within the Ubuntu worldview, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (isiNguni languages) or *motho ke motho ka batho* (Sesotho-Setswana languages), this means 'I am because you are'. The phrases echo the practice of promoting the success of an individual within the community. It places visitors, the weak and vulnerable at the centre of community and promotes them as recipients of care and compassion. Nicolaides (2022) states that the values inherent in Ubuntu are a core part of that value system which is contained in the South African Constitution and speak to inter-alia notions of human dignity, equality, the development of human rights and freedoms. In any event, Ubuntu also stresses that the utmost good should be created for the greatest number of people and the concept of ethics is assessed as a duty and not as a right, and so human welfare is stressed first and foremost.

A small number of *zama zamas* are self-employed individuals who work in closed gold mine yards and shafts, and contract *zama zamas* who tend to work in operating mines. Most of the *zama zamas* are often men recruited from poverty-stricken backgrounds in the country and neighbouring countries and are vulnerable to be used as cheap labour in the closed gold mine dumps and shaft around the Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City and other parts of Gauteng Province. They are also exposed to hazardous and dangerous working conditions that affect their health and well-being. In addition, they are at the mercy of the gold syndicate



leaders who recruited them to produce gold for them. Macheke (2018: 233) describes their condition as follows:

lives are lost due to poisonous gases, falling rocks and gang rivalry. Such livelihoods are dangerous not only to undocumented migrants in terms of their safety, but also to the South African government in terms of environmental degradation. Unsafe conditions also refer to insecurity in wages, use of cloned documents that promote criminality, profits to criminal enterprises, unequal opportunities to receive an education, predominance of diseases and a constant general uncertainty that effectuates a slow death for vulnerable communities. Vulnerability as noted in this study can be caused by multiple stressors and is the product of complex interactions during its progression however, human needs and human securities are continuously contested and struggled for by employing coping strategies discussed below.

The gold syndicate leaders do not care about their living conditions. They only think about themselves. The pictures of the *zama zamas* arrested in the gold mine dump near West Village in Mogale City and the equipment used, and the *zama zama* seen digging for gold elsewhere depicts the work environment (EWN, 2022; Magubani, 2022). Furthermore, newspaper reports mentioned that one of the men arrested at the West Village Gold Mine dump is a minor (Pijoos 2022). This incident communicates the practice of child labour in the illegal mining syndicate (cf Williams, 2019:24); a contravention of Children Act 38 of 2005. In addition, all the arrested men were found to be illegally in the country, in violation of South Africa's immigration laws, and point to human trafficking in illegal gold mining.

Clearly, these operations and the actions of illegal gold mining syndicate leaders contradict Ubuntu's values of care for the weak and vulnerable in the community and for the respect of human dignity (Nicolaidis, 2015; 2022). The arrested *zama-zamas* now face charges of rape, robbery, assault, possession of unlicensed firearms, and contravening the mineral acts in the Krugersdorp Magistrate courts. They were further charged for entering the country illegally in the Kagiso Magistrate's court. Sadly, the gold syndicate do not feature in these charges.

From a Christological perspective, Christ taught his followers that one of the greatest commandments is to love your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:25-29) after one of the influential religious leaders asked him what the greatest commandment is. He went further and used the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) to demonstrate what he meant by loving your neighbour as yourself. The story shows the Good Samaritan demonstrated care and compassion. From this story, we identify the need to show unconditional care and compassion victims of malice. Christ also demonstrated this when he fed five thousand people in a hungry crowd (Matthew 15:32-38).

The gold syndicate leaders are far from displaying care and compassion for the men they recruit to dig gold in unused gold mine shafts and mining dumps where they are obliged to walk and crawl for about two kilometres and live underground for months digging gold (Macheke, 2018: 219). Unlike the Samaritan in the story, it appears that they do not consider the livelihood of the *zama zamas*. Neither do they intend to stop bringing them illegally into the country to work in extremely appalling conditions.

It is reasonable to compare the living conditions of the men recruited to work in the gold mines in the introduction to the operations of the gold syndicate leaders. The actions of the gold syndicate leaders do not differ much from those of those of the early and later gold mining companies who recruited men from the countryside and the neighbouring countries to provide needed cheap labour to dig gold from deep underground in Rand West City, Westonaria, Mogale City and Merafong City and other gold rich areas in the Gauteng Province. The living conditions and working conditions of the men suggests that the mining companies did not find it necessary to provide humane living and working conditions for thousands of men they employed. The difference is that these were legally in the country and were not minors. Gold



mine shareholders neither depicted loving their neighbour as themselves, nor cared about the well-being of these men during the periods they worked in their companies and after their employment as many mines in these regions ceased operations after reaching the end of their useful life. As a result, since the economies of these regions depended on the mines, their closures lead to massive job losses and unemployment rose (Magadzu, 2021: 17)

Many former employees chose not to return to their places of birth at home or abroad, but instead chose to stay, and currently reside in the many informal settlements in these areas. Some of these former employees have found new ways to generate income. One way is to use their work experience excavating gold-rich rock underground and refining it to produce gold for illegal sale (Magadzu 2021:19). This income-generating scheme grew and later created the *zama-zama* enterprises in the region as former employees and some residents were creating the means to achieve human flourishing.

The love of money, greed, and sharing,

Jesus' story mentions that the Good Samaritan displayed the value of sharing and paying the cost of accommodating for the wounded traveller. To him, the livelihood of the wounded traveller was important. The opposite is true for the illegal mining syndicate leaders who traffic vulnerable men to dig gold for them. The love of money and greed drive them to use vulnerable men from poor backgrounds in the country and the neighbouring countries. Gold produced by the *zama zamas* in South Africa is estimated to be at least 5% to 10% of the country's annual gold production (SAPA, 2014; News 24, 2016 in Macheka, 2018:220). Timeslive (2022) shows photos of police raids in Mohlakeng in Randfontein and West Village in Mogale City where gold products worth R2.5 million were found.

As for gold mines mentioned above, their objective is to generate as much profit as possible to benefit shareholders and minimise labour costs. They did not care about the socio-economic consequences of the people living in the labour reserves called townships and did not find it necessary to close the unused gold shafts and to adequately rehabilitate the gold mine dumps around Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City and other gold rich areas in the country (cf Durand, 2012). Magadzu (2021:16) confirms that this same pattern is seen in many closed mines and areas around them in South Africa.

The most affected are the residents of Kagiso. They are surrounded by gold mines to the west and north of Kagiso East, and the residents of Swaneville are surrounded by gold mines to the east and south. In Randfontein, the inhabitants of Toekomsrus live near a gold mine in the north. Residents of the town of Randfontein live near gold mine dumps to the east and north. As you drive from Johannesburg to Merafong and the North-West, you can see the gold mine dumps along the N12. The actions of the gold mining companies portray a lack of Ubuntu, love of money and the greed that Jesus warned about in Matthew 6:24. and Mark 7:22.

That lack of sharing seems to be propelling the gold and platinum mining company and its shareholders as was evident when the CEO of Sibanye-Stillwaters received a performance bonus of R300.3 million in 2021 (Steyn 2022), but they were unwilling to meet demands for wage increases for existing workers at their gold mines in the region.

The love of money and greed produced the violence and crime that characterised the *zama zamas*, who were described as heavily armed and terrorising communities in townships (Dlamini, 2022). Newspaper reports also point to a territorial war between them (Williams, 2019: 25; Machaka, 2018: 220).

The objective of past (and newly merged) gold mining companies to make large profits (love of money and greed) has created social ills in Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City. These are the health hazards posed by unrehabilitated mines, sporadic informal settlements, high levels of poverty, unemployment and rising crime. The *zama zama* enterprise is also the spill-off effects of the profit objective. It highlights the gap between the



rich and the poor in the area and generally in the country. The gold syndicate leaders have become the members of the 'new rich'.

Finally, the community members of Kagiso and Mohlakeng lamented at an *imbizo* (community meeting Minister Bheki Cele convened) that the police have failed to handle the *zama zama* enterprise in the region (Singh & Nerrisa, 2022). Connecting the dots, point to greed and the love of money, among some police officers, as community members from Kagiso accused them of accepting bribes from the *zama zamas* in these areas (Singh & Nerrisa, 2022). This accusation adds the police to the list of the mining companies and the gold syndicate leaders whose actions place money first. It also raises suspicion that the police are involved in a sophisticated gold syndicate operation.

An Ubuntu-Christocentric alternative to illegal gold mining in the area

The *zama zama* enterprise highlights the pre-1994 structural economic inequalities that continue to exist in the post-1994 South Africa and echo Williams' (2019:22) view that poverty and unemployment contribute to illegal mining in South Africa. This observation calls for an alternative to the enterprise of illegal gold mining, so this article takes an Ubuntu-Christocentric approach. The approach suggests that the government and the gold mining houses adapt a caring and sharing attitude and challenges them to embrace the teaching of Jesus to love your neighbour as self, care for the weak and vulnerable and avoid greed and the love of money that end in corrupt actions. The alternative considers the plight of the poor and the unemployed in Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City given that the Chamber of mines 2016 report that "South African mining industry has lost roughly 50 000 jobs over the last ten years, mostly from the gold industry and with the prospect of more to come" (Williams, 2019:23).

An Ubuntu-Christocentric approach suggests two alternatives, namely, providing some legislative framework to enable artisan and small-scale mining (ASM) in the region in line with the National Small-Scale Mining Development Framework which was launched in April 1999 and the closure of open unused gold mine shafts. On the former, the government is challenged to provide some legislative framework that allows communities from these areas to be a part of the gold production sector. This will allow them to benefit from the wealth of the country and generate income for the communities in these areas as intended in the Mineral and Petroleum Resource Development Act 28 (MPRDA). The Ubuntu-Christocentric approach concurs with Vellem's (2013:14,17-18) argument that the creation of the black middle class was at the expense of the poor working class and that Mbeki's Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) and Zuma's National Development Plan were securing the interest of the capitalists. The middle-class black elite was basically created from the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) in the mining sector through the Mineral and Petroleum Resource Development Act 28 of 2002.

The Ubuntu-Christocentric approach also resonates with the argument of introducing artisanal mining to benefit surrounding communities and reduce poverty and unemployment which is almost endemic (Masweneng, 2017). This idea would allow small businesses to operate, which would contribute to more tax collection for the state and enable human prosperity through legitimate means rather than the problematic *zama zama* enterprise (Debrah, Watson & Quansah, 2014:913). Accordingly, provisions for equal access to minerals for all members of these affected communities should be achieved, as well as strengthening the social aspects of mining and economic empowerment (see Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 (MPRDA). Hosken (2017) argues that an enabling legal framework will benefit the community as they will start selling clothes, kneecaps, protective gear and food to miners.

A further step is creating specific artisan mining areas using a multi-ministerial approach. This will address health, environmental, law enforcement and documentation of artisans to enable law enforcement monitoring and deterring unregistered artisans.



Finally, two suggestions in the legal framework are: first, a creation of a joint law enforcement cooperation consisting of SAPS, Community Police Forum-CPF and mine security divisions. This suggests that the government should work with the mine companies to maximise commercial and community benefits since mines spent R75 million a year to curb illegal mining in its shafts (William, 2019:19). Second, the legal framework should require artisans to contribute a small percentage to finance CPF operations.

In the second alternative, artisan mining should also be accompanied by prohibiting illegal gold mining in the region and closing of open shafts to counteract illegal gold mining and its syndicate leaders, to combat criminal acts related to the *zama zamas*. There is a need to protect the community from the effect of toxic chemicals illegal miners used (cf Williams 2019, 25) and criminal activities of the *zama-zamas*.

We note two developments in the recent *zama zama* phenomenon in Kagiso, Mohlakeng, and Westonaria Borwa. First, the Minister of Mineral and Energy Resources, Gwede Mantashe, statement that a task force is needed to address the *zama zamas* shows the reality of the crime and violence they commit. Secondly, in the wake of the events of the West Village and the actions of the residents of Kagiso and Mohlakeng, the Green Beret Task Force deployed in Kagiso and Mohlakeng proved that tackling the *zama zama* enterprise is not an easy undertaking that is fraught with danger. The move will require the South African government to engage with the governments of neighbouring countries in curbing the flow of undocumented nationals in the country as well as to create an intergovernmental approach through the SADC framework to address the issues of human trafficking and child labour practice in the illegal gold mining and other forms of illegal mining in the region. Consequently, poverty-stricken men from the neighbouring countries will hopefully no longer be trafficked and abused to work and to live in appalling conditions.

It is also encouraging to read newspaper reports that the Minister of Mineral and Energy Resources, Gwede Mantashe, has tabled a budget for a special task team to address the *zama zama* enterprise and expressed that R 49 billion is needed to rehabilitate closed mines (Magubane, 2022). The costs of closing of mines in South Africa is more that the estimated at 2.7 billion, as Harvey (2014) has suggested.

Conclusion

The article focused on the recruitment actions and living conditions of recruited mine workers in Johannesburg, east and west of Johannesburg. It showed that some of the mining companies closed after reaching their lifespan and implementing of downsizing. The result was high unemployment in the areas of Rand West City, Mogale City and Merafong City as most employees did not return to the birthplace. To alleviate poverty and unemployment some of these employees resolved to join illegal gold mining operations. They were later joined by illegal nationals called *zama zama* whom the gold syndicate leaders introduced. Consequently, legal mining and illegal mining co-existed in the area. The working and living conditions of *zama zamas* are appalling. They also fuel crime in the region, as observed in the rape of women in the West Village, near the city of Mogale.

The article shows that both gold mine companies the gold syndicate leaders have not practised the Ubuntu values of care and sharing as well Christ's teachings to love your neighbour as self, care for the weak and vulnerable and avoiding greed and the love of money. It proposes an Ubuntu-Christocentric alternative that promotes caring, sharing, loving your neighbour as self, care for the weak and vulnerable and avoiding greed and the love of money. This approach resonates with the argument for addressing poverty and unemployment in mining areas by introducing some legal framework in the Minerals and Petroleum Resource and Development Act (MPRDA) to promote community economic empowerment and mitigate certain social aspects, such as the *zama zama* enterprise. If a Christocentric approach is followed, the life, teaching, and person of the Jesus Christ should be the main point of biblical interpretation on how we ought to treat people in society. Jesus Christ is the image of God



and the fullness of God in bodily form. He should be the role model for all enterprises and what he taught, and revealed to us is essential for an ethical life irrespective of which legal (or illegal) industry or sector we are employed. We should constantly be striving to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This means that we should never exploit or oppress people in whatever field they are employed. Treating others as we would be treated means we must be willing to set aside our own preferences, rights, and desires in order to serve our fellow human beings. There is no easy solution to the complications that come from illegal mining. Mining companies must take adequate steps and assume full responsibility to guarantee the closure and making safe of all unused mines and those who come to South Africa illegally and work in illegal operations should be brought to book. It is the right thing to do.

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