

PMINetwork[®]

MARCH/APRIL 2021 VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2

Rethinking

LEADERSHIP

Insights from

54

trailblazers and
thought leaders,
including

**JOSÉ ANDRÉS
MALALA YOUSAFZAI
NADIA COMANECI
ALEXIS OHANIAN
PRIYA PARKER**

 **Project
Management
Institute.**

Zimbabwe Leans Forward

Zimbabwe faced more than its share of challenges even prior to the global pandemic. Its currency had collapsed and inflation had surged to more than 700 percent. The country's efforts to curb damage from COVID-19 were further hampered by drug shortages and strikes by nurses and other public workers.

Yet, by the tail end of 2020, major projects in mining, agriculture, energy and transportation were advancing, offering a glimmer of hope that the nation's economic revival efforts may have weathered the global health crisis. Flavious Coffee, PMP, who is based in Harare and is the president of PMI's Zimbabwe chapter, said sponsors began reviving stalled projects and launching new initiatives as the government relaxed pandemic-related restrictions. But to ensure these projects deliver sustained value and set up teams for repetitive success, organizations need to maintain strong project management processes from start to finish, Coffee says.

"Project managers are not always involved from the initiation stages of projects and lack resource support during the execution stages," he says. "By the time the project is closed, the project manager is not able to perform proper project closure."

Despite that, Coffee remains optimistic about Zimbabwe's ability to improve its economic health. "In developing countries like Zimbabwe, development is achieved by way of projects. The climate is very good for projects."

These projects illustrate how organizations are seizing opportunities:

Precious Metals

A US\$2 billion project by Great Dyke Investments to build the nation's largest platinum group metals mine in Darwendale, 65 kilometers (40 miles) west of the capital Harare, cleared a due diligence study in September that allowed it to raise funds for the first phase. Russian and Zimbabwean investors have already spent US\$100 million on exploration and construction, with plans to start mining in 2021. Zimbabwe, which houses the world's third-largest reserves of platinum, has made mining the linchpin of its economic revival efforts, setting an ambitious goal of boosting mining output from



Workers survey an area for the Darwendale platinum mine project near Harare, Zimbabwe.

US\$2.7 billion to US\$12 billion annually by 2023.

The Darwendale project still faces a formidable challenge in raising capital due to the country's poor track record on repaying debts to the World Bank and other multilateral groups, according to Bloomberg. And while a strong end to the 2020 fiscal year for Zimplats, the nation's largest platinum miner, in June suggested that the mining industry weathered pandemic-fueled lockdowns well, a global slowdown of the diamond industry could be the first omen of ripple effects from COVID-19 that could leave Zimbabwean miners with surplus stock and a diminished market. Still the project promises positive impact.

"We estimate employment creation of 4,000 jobs through all the phases including mining, processing and smelting," Munashe Shava, the mine's chief operations officer, told *African Mining Market*. "To date, we have spent about US\$100 million on geological exploration and construction on two mine portals and surface infrastructure. With the way operations are moving, we envisage beating the target of 2022's first exportation mark."

Greener Pastures

The government has also pushed for sustainable energy projects, approving dozens in recent years for an investment of more than US\$2.3 billion. Those initiatives include the 12-megawatt solar plant at Blanket Mine that would supply 27 percent of the



"In developing countries like Zimbabwe, development is achieved by way of projects. The climate is very good for projects."

—Flavious Coffee, PMP, Harare, Zimbabwe

PHOTO BY GODFREY MARAWANYIKA/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



electricity needed to operate the town's eponymous gold mine, reducing its reliance on diesel generators and improving its environmental impact.

In October, mine owner Caledonia Mining Corp. announced that it had agreed on the project's initial design phase with partner Voltalia, a global provider of renewable energy. Along with reducing Blanket Mine's environmental footprint, the project is expected to reduce any further deterioration in the quality of the mine's grid power which would demand increased use of diesel generators—a substantially more expensive alternative to grid power.

Caledonia has raised US\$13 million for the project with plans to commission the plant by the end of 2021.

Tech Revival

In May, South Africa's Vaya Africa chose Zimbabwe as the first location for an electric vehicle taxi service and charging network, a pilot that it plans to scale across the continent.

Shifting to electric mobility solutions in the African market is an economic and environmental imperative: The high price of fuel compared to most drivers' earnings causes them to lose money. Going electric changes that, delivering an estimated savings of 40 percent on fuel and automotive maintenance costs. The Vaya team is now exploring additional on-demand mobile applications—from motorcycle deliveries to Tuk Tuk taxis.

The Future Is Femtech

Healthcare technology tailored to women—dubbed femtech—is going mainstream, and analysts expect the surge of projects to increase. Tech solutions like apps, medical devices and wearables that cater to the needs of women's health are estimated to hit US\$9 billion in revenue by 2024, according to new research by market firm Frost & Sullivan.

"We know so many issues of womanhood can be improved by technology, and there is so much potential in this space," Tania Boler, CEO of femtech firm Elvie, told *Fast Company*. These three projects are helping drive the trend:

HOME SCREEN

In September, biotechnology startup Juno Bio launched its at-home kit that screens individuals' vaginal microbiomes, giving them greater insights into their health. The

development of the commercial kits comes on the heels of a 2019 project to gather samples from more than 1,000 women in the United States in order to build up an initial data repository.



BIRTH CONTROL, REIMAGINED

Cirql Biomedical's Ovi project aims to develop a topical birth control that modifies the superficial cervical mucus layer—no hormones required. Prototypes of the

target polymer are in preclinical trials, with the first in-human study "a near-term goal," said Cirql Biomedical scientist Ljudmila Katchan, PhD.



APP EVOLUTION

Elvie, one of the largest femtech startups, has raised more than US\$50 million in project funding and has a portfolio ranging from wearable breast pumps to an app-connected Kegel trainer. In

early 2020, Elvie completed the development of its Insights app, which allows breastfeeding women to see stats on their milk production at the touch of a button. —Amanda Hermans

