

New profits

It is perhaps unsurprising then that the new investors are themselves now making significant sums. Although MCM claim that they are still investing, rather than taking out profits, First Quantum's net earnings exploded from \$4.6 Million in 2003 to \$152.8 Million in 2005. First Quantum returned approximately 10% of the 2005 after tax profit to shareholders, who were also rewarded with exceptional share price performance. Since 2000, First Quantum's shares have returned more than 1,000%, or an average annual rate of 200%⁽⁵¹⁾. As the company's 2005 Annual Report notes, "As good as 2005 was, 2006 is shaping up to be a better year for the Company. Copper production is expected to climb to approximately 200,000 tonnes (441 million pounds), a 68% increase over 2005. To date in 2006, copper prices have risen well above \$2.00 per pound and this will provide a further increase to our already healthy profit margins."⁽⁵²⁾ By November, the company was reporting that profits in the third quarter of 2006 were triple those in the same period in 2005. First Quantum was selling copper at an average of \$3.17 per pound, more than double the price it was achieving a year earlier⁽⁵³⁾. Similarly, KCM's operating profit increased from \$52.7 Million in the year to 2005 to \$206.3 Million in 2006⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Having recognised the success of privatisation in re-capitalising the industry, a MUZ representative thus went on to note that investment, "occurred at a time when copper prices rebounded and rose. These price levels were almost inconceivable, almost unimaginable. We didn't predict that the copper price would ever reach that. So when it did, we found ourselves with a mountain to climb in terms of us taking advantage of the new market and the new copper price."⁽⁵⁵⁾

The Impact of Privatisation on Mine Workers

Mass redundancies

Perhaps the greatest impact of privatisation on the Copperbelt is the mass unemployment that it generated. The historic peak of employment was 1976 when 62,222 worked in the mines. Although the industry declined over the next fifteen years, employment stayed at similar levels, and in 1991 stood at 56,582⁽⁵⁶⁾. From this moment, the Government declared the workforce bloated and, as part of the process of preparing the mines for privatisation, implemented a significant retrenchment programme. Employment levels had fallen to 31,000 by the sale of the first mine in 1997.⁽⁵⁷⁾ However, after privatisation, the workforce was cut by another third almost immediately and total employment dropped to 19,145 in 2001⁽⁵⁸⁾. According to the Chamber of Mines the numbers of people in direct employment by the mining houses has since increased slightly, to 19,900 in 2004⁽⁵⁹⁾.

Unpaid Pensions

Asked whether state negotiators would adopt the same approach to negotiation of the Development Agreements if they could go through the process again, the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development commented: "We would do it differently. There were a large number of people who were being laid off in the process of privatisation to the extent that the general public felt like, what was in it for them in the privatisation? It was like foreigners were just coming over to take over and run and get fat cheques while the local people were thrown into unemployment and they were not seeing anything coming on."⁽⁶⁰⁾ However, it was not simply the unemployment created by privatisation that was unpopular; it was the manner in which redundant workers were dealt with. The PS continues, "The companies in general did not want to take on the labour liabilities that were under ZCCM, to provide terminal benefits after someone has worked for years. They prefer the situation where the cut-off date would be when they move in. From that date, the people they have as their employees, they will take care of them. But for those who worked in ZCCM and whom the companies did not want to take over because they felt it was a bloated labour force, Government had to take care of that."⁽⁶¹⁾

Handing responsibility for ZCCM liabilities to Government may have seemed like a logical step, encouraging new investors that they would not have to taken on additional costs. However, he also notes that the strategy was not appropriate to the Zambian situation: “That was a time when government coffers were not that good. We had a heavy external debt and the IMF and World Bank and co-operating partners at that time agreed with us that when we framed the budget, priority was to be given to debt service. So to address some of these concerns it was very difficult, because we did not have money. So if we were to go back to the period before privatisation and we had this knowledge we would have done it differently. As things stand up to now we are getting complaints from the mining sector that the pensions that you gave us are too little, and we want more, that we have not been paid and we would like to be paid.” (62). It was not simply the treatment of financial issues that created so much resentment about the redundancies, it was also the manner in which it was dealt with. As the General Secretary of NUMAUW explained, “Retrenchment some years back was not a common word. It was retirement. Then, about a year before I was going to leave, the company would come. I would be asked where I was going to stay and what I was planning to do. If I wanted to go into fishing, I would be maybe sent to a class with a renowned fisherman, so that, when I got to my village, I am not going to struggle or starve in that place, old as I am, with energy exhausted, I am going to be able to make a life. Retrenchment today: Bring the keys. Part company. Come next week and collect the cheque. Inhuman.” (63).

Casualisation and poverty wages

As discussed, at the moment of privatisation, most of the new investors started by stripping-back the labour force to the bare bones, and although they have since very slightly increased their total employment levels, rather than taking on permanent workers they have tended to either offer fixed-term contracts with no job security and no pension, or to sub-contract much of the work out. Since privatisation, almost all of the growth in employment in the mines has been for those employed by contracting firms. This number increased from 2,628 in 2000 to 11,536 in 2004 (64). Because of the variations in types of contracts offered, it is difficult to calculate exact numbers of people working in the industry under different terms and conditions. However, based on interviews with mine management in the five firms that make up the lion’s share of employment, we believe that for these five companies, as of September 2006, there at least 21,000 workers on pensionable contracts at the mining houses, another 16,000 employed indirectly via contracting firms and at least 1,900 employed by the mining companies on either fixed-term contracts or as seasonal/casual labour. While on average just over half of all those working in these mines are on permanent contracts with the mining houses, Chambishi Mines (owned by the Chinese state-enterprise NFCA) operates a highly unusual system in which of 2,200 workers, only 52 have permanent contracts. The shares of workers under different terms are shown in Appendix 4.

In most companies, jobs such as ‘development’ (digging new seams) have been passed on to sub-contracting firms. This has meant that many ex-miners have been hired to work on the same site as they previously worked, but this time indirectly employed via sub-contracting firms. As MUZ officials note, these workers are “doing almost the same development jobs or the same mining jobs. But this time on fixed term contracts - three months. Without the union. On a lower wage. No patient cover. No housing, but they are given a housing allowance. Basically none of the fringe benefits that would have accrued.” (65).

As shown in Appendix 5, wages at the various mining houses differ. However, at only one of the mining houses – Chambishi Metals - were wages of the lowest paid unionised workers in January 2006 above poverty levels established by the Basic Needs Basket (BNB). The BNB is a figure generated by monthly research by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) into the cost for an average Zambian family of six of basic food items and non-food items such as charcoal and soap, and costs of housing, water and electricity, education, health and transport to work ⁽⁶⁶⁾. At the worst paying of the major mining companies, again that owned by NFCA, only the very highest paid of the unionised work force will be able to cover these expenses from their wages, and the poorest paid are earning only just above the costs of the Basic Food Basket (BFB), a figure which covers food items alone. This suggests the levels of hardship that mineworkers are now suffering.

However, as shown in Appendix 6, wages at two of the most significant of these sub-contracting firms, Pro-Sec and Mpelembe Drilling, are approximately half of those offered at the biggest mining company, Mopani, for the same task. The terms and conditions of full-time workers at these sub-contracted firms are also significantly less favourable than those at the mining houses.

Furthermore, even those staff working for the sub-contracting firms are not all accepted onto these terms and conditions. At Mpelembe Drilling, the permanent workforce has been hovering at around 600-800. Over and above that there are over 1,000 fixed-term contractors who, according to MUZ, are shifted across short contracts working in many cases more than a year at a time without job security or pension provision. Employers have resisted the right of unions to organise workers, and recognition of the rights of those on rolling short-term contracts to representation and job security. MUZ report, “We went to them and said, ‘from our perspective, these are people who are with you, for as long as these permanents are’. And management up to today is still consulting.” MUZ has, however, been more successful in unionising the staff at Pro-Sec ⁽⁶⁷⁾

An extremely hierarchal system of employment has developed with terms and conditions of workers performing the same tasks, often in the same mines, varying wildly. While the total wage and the pension scheme are probably the most significant differences, most contract workers will not have access to medical insurance or free treatment for their dependents, while most permanent workers will. The range of allowances on offer from each employer is different but certainly workers on fixed-term contracts and those working for sub-contracting firms see fewer perks, if any.

Casualisation and safety problems

Unequal terms and conditions for workers doing similar jobs are almost certain to generate significant resentments. It also has negative effects on safety within the mines. Officials within Mines Safety Department suggest that although overall, the safety record in mines has improved since privatisation, the exception is in the use of sub-contracted staff. For example, many contractors work in 'development', the process of preparing new tunnels for mining. Development is carried out under 'support compliance' regulations that require that as they dig into a new tunnel, miners should not be asked to work in an unsupported roof-span of more than 2 metres, in order to avoid rock-falls. However, Mines Safety inspectors report, "you will find that somebody has gone mad and developed 20 metres, because you know most of the development is now done by contractors who are paid by the metre, so they go mad developing and they leave people exposed without support in the roof sheets. That is the most common accident - rock-fall. Sure enough you go there and you find someone is just scratching their heads - and they say, 'sorry, I was under pressure.' So, my biggest worry is the use of contractors. When I joined the mines, all the work used to be done by the mining companies themselves. Development, timbering. etc. But with the coming of the new investors, they believe in out-sourcing. To me some of it has got to ridiculous lengths. It was all done for the sake of reducing the labour costs and overheads. The mines come to an arrangement with the contractors that they pay them so much for the work done. But we have got greedy contractors who will not pass on the salaries to the workers - they pay them the minimum wage. But to me a worker who goes to work hungry, he is an unsafe worker. Half the time he is distracted." (68).

Casualisation and problems organising and representing workers

In a situation where the formal regulatory bodies, such as Mines Safety Department, are severely under-funded, unions should be able play a key role in exposing abuses and in pressuring for safer working places and better terms and conditions. However, privatisation has also decimated the unions themselves, affecting the total number of organised members and creating financial crises for the institutions. Current membership of the Mineworkers Union is 16,000 while a new union, NUMAUW has emerged since privatisation and now claims 4-5,000 members.

Both unions have faced significant difficulties in organising workers employed by the sub-contracting companies. As MUZ report, "Our members went into ProSec, went into Mpelembe Drilling. Well, we thought, no, these are the same members who are now bringing down the average wage, former MUZ members. We had no choice but to go into new areas that we never used to consider for unionisation. What has happened, we have met stiff challenges." (69). Zambia's weak labour legislation makes organising workers, particularly setting up union branches in new workplaces, difficult. Unions cannot simply go into a company and announce that they want to recruit. Rather, before recognition can be considered, the union must identify a 'shadow committee' of employees. However, the experience of MUZ organisers is that once such a committee is established, firms have simply sacked those staff that constitute the committee, sending a clear message to the workforce that unionism will not be tolerated. MUZ representatives report that they are having to adopt underhand tactics, "The moment they are publicly known we have ended up finding that the whole shoot are dismissed. So, when you go there, once you have identified a shadow committee they have to clandestinely organise." (70).

Even once a workplace is organised, taking collective action remains a significant challenge. Where unions and employers are negotiating and there is a dispute, both parties have to agree on the next course of action to take. As MUZ representatives have it, "It is a process co-managed by the victor and a victim." (71). Even if the union decides to strike, and secures a 2/3 majority of members, they must still wait 10 days before the strike. Within the 10 days the Minister has the power to go to court and declare that that strike is not in the public interest. Although most employers recognise the Zambian trade unions as extremely professional and reasonable, industrial relations on the Copperbelt have been extremely conflictual. This has occurred in part because, in the absence of labour laws that enable unions to effectively represent their members, members take things into their own hands, frequently downing tools in wildcat strikes.

Company approaches to casualisation

The Chamber of Mines claims that offering fewer and fewer workers living wages, job security and a pension is 'international best practice'. They argue "the world has been reduced to a global village where multinational companies' practices are being replicated in all countries of investment and Zambia is no exception. It is recognised that for the mining companies to remain competitive at the international level, they have to adopt internationally accepted best practices. One such practice being that of engaging the best placed companies in terms of technological competence to perform certain jobs e.g. to use suppliers of LHD loaders to operate and maintain them, use of manufacturers of explosives to do underground development. The nature of employment is gravitating towards contractual engagements to facilitate a situation where companies are left to perform only those functions in which they have a comparative advantage. This is, however, not being done at the expense of formalised recruitment procedures as all companies are expected to abide by the labour laws." (72).

The mining houses differ as to whether they have any responsibility to regulate the contractors that they use.

- KCM take the view that the labour conditions amongst sub-contracted labour forces on their site are none of their business. The Resident Director claims, "I can't tell these contractors what they should pay these people. I will choose the one that submits the best quote, and then they must be paying according to the laws of the country. If they don't follow the law, then I can take action against them." (73).

- Similarly Luanshya Mining suggest that as long as their contractors are operating within the law, the company has no further responsibilities, and that keeping the employment legislation flexible maximises the number of workers employed in total: "When one talks about basic benefits like medical etc. I am very strong that that should never be neglected. In other words, we should not ever be in a situation where we are talking about slave labour. The normal labour laws should and do apply and the labour laws are pretty clear as well. But I would caution that it's probably not appropriate at this time to actively pursue formalising that sector." (74).

- Chambishi Mining, on the other hand, suggest that the legislation is not clear. This is perhaps unsurprising since Chambishi have repeatedly pushed the legislation to its limits and, as discussed above, make massive use of fixed-term contracts and external contractors.

- Mopani CEO Tim Henderson, claims to have adopted a completely different attitude. "The casualisation came about where there used to be what you call labour hire companies and you would go out and guys would just hire anybody and give them to Mopani. And we got rid of that. They either have to be working for that person or they have to be working for us. The other thing we brought in about 18 months ago, we turned around and said contractors have to pay 85% of Mopani's average wage.

So we are not accepting workers coming in at 40-50% of Mopani's wages. We don't want to have people out here complaining and we don't want the Government coming out here and saying it's slave labour." (75). Despite this policy, it should be noted that on 15th November 2006, contract workers at Mopani, hired via Prosec, went on strike in protest at low wages. The figures workers quoted were significantly below the levels Mopani claims to guarantee (76).

Government approaches to regulation of safety and labour issues As described above, in a relatively wide range of areas, both Zambian legislation and the Development Agreements signed with the mining companies should provide leverage for the state in improving the behaviour of the mining companies. However, the state has appeared to lack both the political will and the technical capacity to do so.

The Chief Operating Officer at Luanshya Mining noted that the companies have to submit annual reports to the Mines Department on how they are meeting their commitments under the Development Agreements: "Mines Department used to come back with detailed comments, but now they don't." (77). For example, the Mines Safety Department is supposed to take part in the formulation of new regulations and manage an inspections regime that secures effective implementation to mining regulations, the Explosives Act and mines and minerals environmental regulations. However, the Department is woefully under-funded and performs an almost exclusively reactive function, inspecting the site of accidents after the event. None of the companies interviewed felt that the Department performed an effective function in terms of pro-active inspections or advice to companies. The Department is not even managing to play its role in formulating regulations. Mines Safety and Explosives Regulations were revised in 1996, but the legislation has never been implemented due to a shortage of legal draftsmen in the Department of Mining. While this may not have directly affected the fatal accidents occurring within the mining sector since privatisation, because the changes can be issued to the mines on a non-legislative basis, through 'Safety Letters', the failure to incorporate these letters into legislation reflects the moribund state of the institutions. This can also be seen in the weakness of its staffing, infrastructure and hardware (78). The Department has recently been provided with four new vehicles by Government, which has made a significant difference to their ability to inspect. Sadly, it appears that this development was prompted by the outcry in the country about the inadequately funded Mines Safety Department which has been seen as contributing to the high number of fatal accidents in 2005 rather than by a long-term strategy for building up the Department.

Health and safety practice across the mining industry is extremely uneven, and high fatality rates in the privatised mines, as well as incidents of lax safety implementation are constantly raised by workers and residents as one of the litany of complaints against mining companies. Failures for example to provide straightforward safety equipment, such as work boots and hard hats are widely reported, although we have not gathered independent evidence of such claims. In 2005 there were 78 fatal accidents to October (79).

Labour issues should also be regulated by the Department of Labour Affairs and by the Labour Commissioner. However, significant problems persist. The IMF may have misread the legislative situation, but its perception probably reflects the common views of mining sector employers. "Because the law no longer makes it an obligation for employers to recognise trade unions, there has been a growing anti-union tendency among new investors, some of whom have abandoned workers without paying them severance allowances." (80)

Historically, as the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Mines describes, the state has not used its regulatory powers to enforce legislation, attempting instead polite dialogue with the companies: "What we have observed is that some of the mining companies are flouting our labour laws. We could go with an iron hand and just do what is legal. But we have opted to talk to them first, to educate them so that they understand our labour laws, and understand that in whatever country they go to they will find the same demand that you have to respect the labour laws of that country." (81). In some cases, it may be that this dialogue approach works. Mopani's Chief Executive says, "The Government have been here on a couple of occasions and brought up this casualisation of labour with us but there is no law or anything they can say you've broken this and you've got to do that. We occasionally have these meetings, these things get brought up and because those things have been brought up then something might happen - so we decide whether we're going to change things anyway. So we've gone and changed certain conditions and certain rules and regs irrespective of what might come out." (82)

However, frustration at the refusal of all mining companies to end casualisation and respect worker's rights is increasing. At the moment, even in cases where unions have succeeded in establishing new branches, in many cases the employers have refused to recognise them or allow contract labour to be represented, although this is clearly a breach of the Zambian Labour Relations Act. In the face of ongoing company resistance, the Labour Commissioner was forced in 2005 to issue a memorandum clarifying that such employees have a clear right to representation.

The circular read in part: "There appears to be a great deal of uncertainty among the labour market parties with regard to the rights of employees in respect of Trade Union membership. Many employers and employees' representative organizations hold the view that casual employees including those serving on probation and fixed term contracts are not unionisable. It has come to my notice that this belief has reigned for a very long time indeed and I feel duty bound to clarify the matter. Under Section 5(1) of the Industrial and Labour Relations Act... every employee shall have the following rights:- (a) the right to take part in the formation of a trade union; (b) the right to be a member of a trade union of that employee's choice..." "Employee" is defined as meaning any person who has entered into works under a contract of employment with an employer whether such a contract is express or implied, oral or written, or serving on a probationary period of employment, a casual employee, an employee specifically engaged on temporary basis for work of an intermittent or seasonal nature... The issue of casualisation of labour should not prohibit the unionization of any category of employees because as already explained above even casual employees can be and should out of necessity be unionized" (83).

However, some companies have questioned the interpretation of the law contained in the memorandum. Companies' determination to continue using casual and expatriate labour and to refuse the right to organise unions appears, especially following the mileage made on the issues by opposition candidates during the election, to be leading towards a change of tactics from the Government.

In his first speech to Parliament after the elections, President Mwanawasa said, "In January this year, I pleaded with mining companies to adopt labour policies that should promote and safeguard the dignity of Zambian workers. I said then that any departure from this would attract corrective action from Government. I regret to note that most mining companies in Zambia have not changed their attitudes towards their Zambian employees. In most cases mining companies have preferred to employ expatriates instead of Zambians and have overlooked the principle of equal pay for equal work. Consequently, qualified Zambians have opted to resign their positions in frustration. In the area of procurement, similar discriminatory practices have been applied by the new mining investors. Many Zambian companies, despite their capability, have been denied contracts which have instead been given to foreign traders. Let me take this opportunity to remind our development partners in the mining industry to desist from these practices. Zambian labour laws must be observed at all times. Government is embarking on the 'Buy Zambia Campaign' and this applies to all business transactions, be they goods, services or indeed labour. I hope that this is the last time I will talk about this subject." (84).

In November 2006, Government then called a stakeholders' meeting to discuss casualisation, at which the Mines Minister Dr Kalombo Mwansa picked up particularly on the problem within the mining sector. He noted, "A number of accidents that have occurred in the mines have been attributed to the use of casual labour. Comparatively more casual or contract labour personnel are accident victims compared with regular and permanent employees... The employment Act Cap 268 defines a casual employee as one whose employment provides for his or her payment at the end of the day and who is employed for a period of not more than six months. However, the tendency by most employers has been to employ people on casual basis for more than six months." (85). It is unclear then whether the Government intends to enforce current laws more stringently, or to make legislative or regulatory changes. In 2005, the Ministry of Labour was apparently considering the introduction of a statutory instrument to tighten up the rules on casualisation. It is not clear whether this proposal is still under consideration.

PROFILE:

Reuben Mondoka, former mineworker, Kalulushi Township (86).

I got a job in 1981 at Chibuluma mine to work underground as a plant fitter, looking after pumps and locomotives. Well, I found that I was inclined to think about people and I got involved in trade unionism. In 1983 I became the shop steward, and they elected me in 1985 as the vice-chairperson of the Chibuluma Mines branch. In 1987 I became chairman.

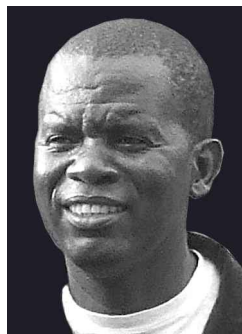
My interest was really not to quarrel too much with the expatriates, although people thought I quarrelled because my English was better than most and I was able to communicate with the expatriates without fear. At that time a lot of people were scared to talk to expatriates and express themselves.

Well, we complained to say the money wasn't enough. But instead of improving the salaries, they gave all these things for free. ZCCM provided housing for its workers and paid the land rates, electricity and water bills. They maintained the roads. ZCCM even provided blankets and a pack of baby nappies when the child was born. They gave mealie. The President had preached socialism and in general people wanted the company to do a lot more for them. So you can see, we had benefits, yes, they did quite a lot, but it wasn't felt by the people. The maintenance was not good, especially here in Kalulushi, and they tended to concentrate more on providing for the senior staff.

ZCCM provided education, but not education for all. The trust schools were run by the mine and were very good, with very good teachers. You can't compare them with Government schools. But only a few people could get their children in - of course it had to be someone senior - a foreman or above. Here where we are now was called town centre and this was where expatriates lived and the foremen and above. And attention was paid more to this elite group than the lower grades. There wasn't enough force pushing ideas for them.

Rather than just talk about money I felt the need to discuss the social facilities. My main concern was the way we were living in the community. For me I felt it was difficult - I had come from a decent place before so it was hard to live in a place like that. The housing, particularly the sewage system in Kalulushi was very bad - there was sewer overflow everywhere in the streets. So I pressed hard to convince my Head of Department who was an expatriate, to say, 'listen, the way we are living in the township is not right. At least improve the sewers.' And one man challenged me. He said, 'the way you present the problem and the way the human resources have written about the problem is not the same'. So I challenged him. I said, 'let's go to the township and see for ourselves'. These were areas that the expatriates didn't bother to visit. But he came and he found that the living conditions around the township were very bad. There were sewerage and water problems, and the maintenance of the houses was poor.

So in the end I won the support of the Mining Department. And they asked me how was I going to deal with the problem? Well I noted there were a lot of second hand pipes at the mine. Without a big budget they could use these to control the flow of the sewage to reduce the smell and disease. So they said, 'can you do it?' Well they allowed me to construct that and I did it. So from that I got involved in the water situation because for the pipe to work the toilet has to flush, and most of the toilets didn't have water. So I also worked with the council to get the water pipeline.



There wasn't specifically a job description for what I had got into via the trade union role – building up the township. They were paying me for underground work while I was seconded to these communities. I had got a gang of guys doing up the houses, painting things. But they realised at the mine they had to replace the work I had been doing underground. So I was interviewed by the mine management and they recommended that I should go on to do adult education in civil engineering – and I agreed that I had a lot of interest in this area.

Well, my time was never to come because in the 1990s Frederick Chiluba came with the idea of privatisation. Privatisation meant that people forgot to implement the promises they had made to some people – to go to school. So that idea died.

They privatised in 1997, but from 1995, they put the mines under different management to prepare for the privatisation. They said the privatised mines will have nothing to do with social amenities provided to workers – so something like township maintenance would not be of interest to the new company who would be here for the core business of mining copper. So I had to find something else to do. That's how they put me as a monitor for copper being delivered from Chibuluma mine. I did that for a while but when Nkana was also privatised they decided between the two privatised mines that this job of monitoring would no longer be there. So again they called me and asked me, 'what was I going to do?' I showed them my papers and they agreed that I was already a foreman. So I went back underground to do fitting of the pumps again. I went back there. But already there had been so many changes, I was still thinking what am I going to do to support the education of my children? With so many changes in ZCCM it was apparent that I wouldn't be going anymore for further education to advance myself – I was going to remain static in a job underground.

So, I stayed with it until 2003, when I left the mine and started concentrating on a school project through the Church under the Marist Brothers, in the township. My Church friends did support me to do that. I still continue doing that project up to the present, organising the fellows working there and helping making the building blocks. But I don't see anything changing for the better for me to be able to support the children. Education is so expensive, let alone college education. What I get from this work is nothing that sees us through the month – just on food we can't see ourselves through the month – so what about this education? It's something very difficult to get satisfaction from. But I will continue until something else comes through at some point.

There should have been money from a pension. What ZCCM did was when they started retrenchments, anybody retrenched was promised to have 28 months pay plus one month for each year they served. That means at the end, in 2003, if Metorex had honoured that agreement, I was going to be paid 28 months, plus 22 months more for the 22 years I worked. So 50 months pay was what I was supposed to be paid. I was on average around 800,000 Kwacha a month, so I should have received around 40 million Kwacha.

But when ZCCM were preparing privatisation, one of the things they did, through a Presidential decision, was to sell the houses in the mine township to the miners. This house we are in now, it was sold to me. Now the sale was actually done by subtracting what you had worked for, for a number of years, your pension, into the value of your house – which they said was worth 32 million Kwacha.

So they said you are going to get the money leftover as a cheque – about 8 million Kwacha, and that would have been my pension. But what happened is that when they privatised, Metorex said that they had nothing to do with the agreement with ZCCM. They claimed that ZCCM should not have agreed to pay the tax on the house sales, and that we would have to cover it – so in fact, they claimed, I was owing them! In the end they backed off from that one, but they refused to pay us what we were owed.

So, when I was going out on retrenchment, Metorex paid me a pension only for the years 1997-2003, when I was working for them. That was just 3 million Kwacha – the equivalent of less than three years salary, to last the rest of my life. We have tried as miners to use lawyers to get the rest of our money. These things have been going on for years but nothing has been won. We have ended up wasting money on lawyers. Many people have given up. In fact, I suppose I have given up. So I have come out after 22 years without my pension. Yes, I've come out with this house, but this house is a house that needs money to do the maintenance. But we have it, it's our asset and it's the only thing that I can point to that I got out from 22 years of service in the mines. I might be able to use it to raise money, or maybe by working in the garden. I mean, they should pay me, of course, but I can't quote any law that could help me.

Unfortunately I didn't have many savings. So we have found ourselves now in a hand-to-mouth situation. There hasn't been a pension. Why? So these are some of the things I started panicking about. My son had to go to school. In fact the kind of money I was getting couldn't pay for that. I had to turn to others at Church to ask for help. At least, the education of my children, it's something I would wish them to have, because if they have education then there will be jobs. But the pension for me does not exist.

They cheated and I think whoever the board of Metorex are, they have benefited from it, but they are not even interested in the people. If you look around the township you can see they have done nothing. That's the saddest story. That's why people in Kalulushi would be very much against the Government because they feel that privatisation hasn't benefited them.