

# POLICY BRIEF

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## Unlocking **socio-economic value** to local communities from **mega development projects**



### Introduction

This policy brief reflects on policies and practices that pertain to local communities surrounding development projects such as mega dam construction, urban expansion and mining activities in the Southern Africa development Community (SADC) countries, focusing on Zimbabwe and South Africa. The reflection is underpinned by the Zimbabwe government's Vision 2030, which is an ambitious and transformative agenda aimed at achieving an Empowered and Prosperous Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030. The vision can only be realized through the implementation of successive national development strategies.

Zimbabwe and South Africa have different development agendas. Zimbabwe's development agenda outlined by the Second Republic in its National Development Strategy 1 is underpinned by key pillars that include economic growth and stability; inter alia food and nutrition security, structural transformation and value chains, infrastructure, utilities and digital economy, housing, human capital development, health, and well-being. These pillars were identified within the context of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Regional Indicative Strategic Development plan (RISDP) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The development agenda prioritizes inclusive growth, with the devolution policy providing a mechanism for provinces

to plan and prioritize development projects that take advantage of the comparative and competitive advantage of each province while ensuring that the people remain at the centre of development. Large scale development projects (for example the Tugwi Mukosi Dam) provide critical infrastructure and enhance natural resource exploitation for economic growth. Such developments have too often been associated with negative social impact of internal displacements of rural communities.

This policy brief provides a timely opportunity for stakeholders, including government ministries, local authorities, development partners, researchers and civil society, to have a conversation about the social and economic impact of development projects in Zimbabwe and globally and to reflect on the past and present experiences and practices. The Tugwi Mukosi case study provides crucial evidence which will inform future practices.

### Contextual background

Tugwi Mukosi Dam, which was commissioned in 2017, is the largest inland water body in Zimbabwe. The country is the second most dammed on the continent next to South Africa. While dam construction contributes to economic growth nationally, in many cases this has left local communities behind. Hence the need to strike a balance between national economic growth and the socio-economic growth of communities around and downstream of these water bodies. It must be balanced by considering

the livelihood options of the affected communities and their right to occupy and use land as provided for in the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has had its fair share of development induced challenges, including during the construction of the Kariba Dam in Mashonaland West Province and the mining of diamonds in Chiadzwa in Manicaland Province. In Agriculture, in the recent decades, the international land grabs also saw some communities being displaced in Manicaland. The establishment of Green Fuel-owned sugarcane plantations and ethanol plants resulted in displacement and land disputes in Chisumbanje. It is estimated that over 83 families had to relocate to Mozambique against their volition, as Green Fuel invaded communal lands and ploughed down people's crops in the process of establishment sugarcane plantations (Mandihlare 2013). In all these displacements, the state's position was influenced by political motive as opposed to the genuine desire to improve the lives and livelihoods of those affected by these 'developmental' projects. What is clear is that the victims of these mega projects have been evaluated by the state as "people in the way of development". This has culminated in the emphasis on quantitative development as opposed to qualitative development, which is critical to poor and marginalized citizens.

In all instances livelihoods of local people were disturbed, and in the worst scenario local communities being displaced. This problem is not peculiar to Zimbabwe. It is in fact, a global challenge and according to the International Displacement Monitoring Centre, there were 30.6 million internal displacements in 2017 alone, which is the equivalent of 80,000 displacements a day.

The Tugwi Mukosi case study urges discussion of the best strategies for overcoming the difficulties associated with development initiatives. It is crucial for line government ministries of local government, agriculture, resettlement, and local authorities to have a comprehensive affirmative action for local communities and a relocation framework at policy or legislative levels in order to cushion rural communities from the negative effects of these challenges. This brief, it is hoped, gives policymakers and legislators useful advice on how communities might profit from local development initiatives.

### Zimbabwe's development agenda and policy options

The current National Development Strategy (NDS) 1 of Zimbabwe is geared towards rural development, economic growth and foreign investment. Hence the current mantra of the President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa: 'Zimbabwe is open for business'. This calls for a review of legislation, policies and practices designed to safeguard the rights and livelihoods of

communities affected and displaced by development projects. According to Schmidt and Vengesai (2021), the following areas of concern and key recommendations have been identified to mitigate the negative impacts and conflicts caused by development-induced displacements in Zimbabwe.

- 1. Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).** Relocation and compensation of people to pave the way for development projects should be guided by the principle of FPIC. It follows that before building the Tugwi Mukosi Dam, the Ministry of Water should have obtained the permission of the locals in the wards surrounding it. Portalewska (2012) defined FPIC as knocking on someone's door and requesting permission before entering. Prior consent indicates that permission is requested before the start of the development project that will cause a physical or economic eviction. This includes the period required to allow the people who will be impacted to make their own decisions. Being informed implies that the individuals who will be impacted by a development project have received all the relevant information, and that it has been presented in a clear, accurate, and objective manner. Based on the compensation procedures and packages that have been arranged with them, consent indicates that the impacted individuals have consented to the development project that would cause their physical and economic eviction. The FPIC concept calls for the meaningful engagement of those who will be impacted by a development initiative, going beyond simple involvement. This was not possible in the case of the Tugwi Mukosi Dam because of the macroeconomic problems Zimbabwe was experiencing as a result of economic sanctions the West had placed on the nation.
- 2. Fair and comprehensive compensation.** By compensation we mean monetary payments, the replacement of buildings and assets, or any other kind of assistance provided to the displaced parties to make up for losses or damages they suffered. The idea of equivalence serves as a guide for compensation: those impacted by the process shouldn't become richer or poorer as a result (FAO 2008, p24). The situation of the impacted persons should nonetheless improve. Residents of the wards around the Tugwi Mukosi Dam, however, were not given compensation for the loss of their houses, fields, and grazing land as a result of the construction of the dam.
- 3. Inclusive socio-economic development and profit sharing.** Even if the impacted individuals are not moved physically from one location to another, the development project may nevertheless cause economic displacement, since it would impair their socioeconomic rights, livelihoods, and way of life. The loss of agricultural fields or access to commons

like grazing land, woods, water supplies, and fishing grounds, due to development projects like mining, urban development, or dam building is an example of economic displacement. Mining operations may result in environmental damage that renders agricultural land worthless, forcing nearby inhabitants to shift economically. Occasionally, impacted rural residents are given the option to be integrated and given urban residential stands as replacement land in cases of urban growth or expansion. The loss of their primary source of sustenance and income—agricultural land—could still put them in danger of being economically uprooted. In such circumstances, the impacted persons may require extra resources and assistance to provide them with access to alternate sources of income.

**4. Relocation and compensation before project implementation.** Internationally, it has become a standard practice and requirement for funding and loan facilities to assess the environmental social impact of development projects. This will allow sufficient funds and resources to be set aside for relocation, compensation, and socio-economic rehabilitation of the affected people. This was not possible with projects such as the Tugwi Mukosi Dam, because of the macro-economic fundamentals affecting Zimbabwe due to economic sanctions imposed on the country by the West. Multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank do not want to be associated with negative social impact and human suffering because of development projects they support. Contrary to this, development projects in Zimbabwe, including the Tugwi Mukosi Dam, by some private and public institutions are mainly concerned with financial viability, technical implementation, and potential revenues, while negative social impact often remains an afterthought. Before approving and commencing development projects that will require relocation and compensation of the affected people, a comprehensive resettlement and/or compensation plan must be put in place and agreed with the affected people. If such processes and agreements are not being adhered to, the development project should not be approved and funds for the implementation of the project should not be released.

## Communities' expectations from the Tugwi Mukosi Dam

The following are local communities' expectations from the mega water body in their locality:

### Water for domestic and industrial use

There is an urgent need for water to be conveyed to villages and critical institutions within the area. These

include Gororo Clinic, schools (Gororo Primary, Dare Primary School and Shongamiti Secondary and business centres (Gororo and Shongamiti Townships). The boreholes at the schools are yielding very low amounts of water due to low rainfall in the area. The water problem at the schools prior to the rainfall season was so dire that school pupils are required to carry their own drinking water from home. The respondents further indicated that they walked long distances to access water from Tugwi River, a burden which was largely shouldered by women and children. The business community indicated that water was critical for the envisaged developmental projects in the community such as mining, processing of agricultural products and so on.

The infrastructure for water conveyance should be put in place as a matter of urgency. The water can be pumped to three central points (Gororo, Shongamiti and Dare) within the area into storage tanks to reduce the drudgery involved in accessing it by the community. The water can either be treated or supplied untreated for other purposes. The few existing boreholes will be a contingency measure. In relation to the above, a Zimbabwe National Water Authority official indicated that 10% of the dam's capacity was for the local community for drinking and irrigation purposes. However this has remained on paper as nothing has been implemented.

### Fisheries and natural resources

Communities in and around the dam also want to access the natural resources in the area—not limited to fishing, but also wild animals that are being introduced and managed by the Department of National Parks. The local communities want to be considered when fishing licences are being issued and when employment opportunities arise. Currently, these opportunities are being snatched by outsiders. The Department of National Parks' official indicated that local people would be considered for the issuance of fishing licences. However, he pointed out that the major constraint for these people might be lack of capital. Apart from the government he calls for other players such as financial institutions and development practitioners such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to capacitate local people by funding them.

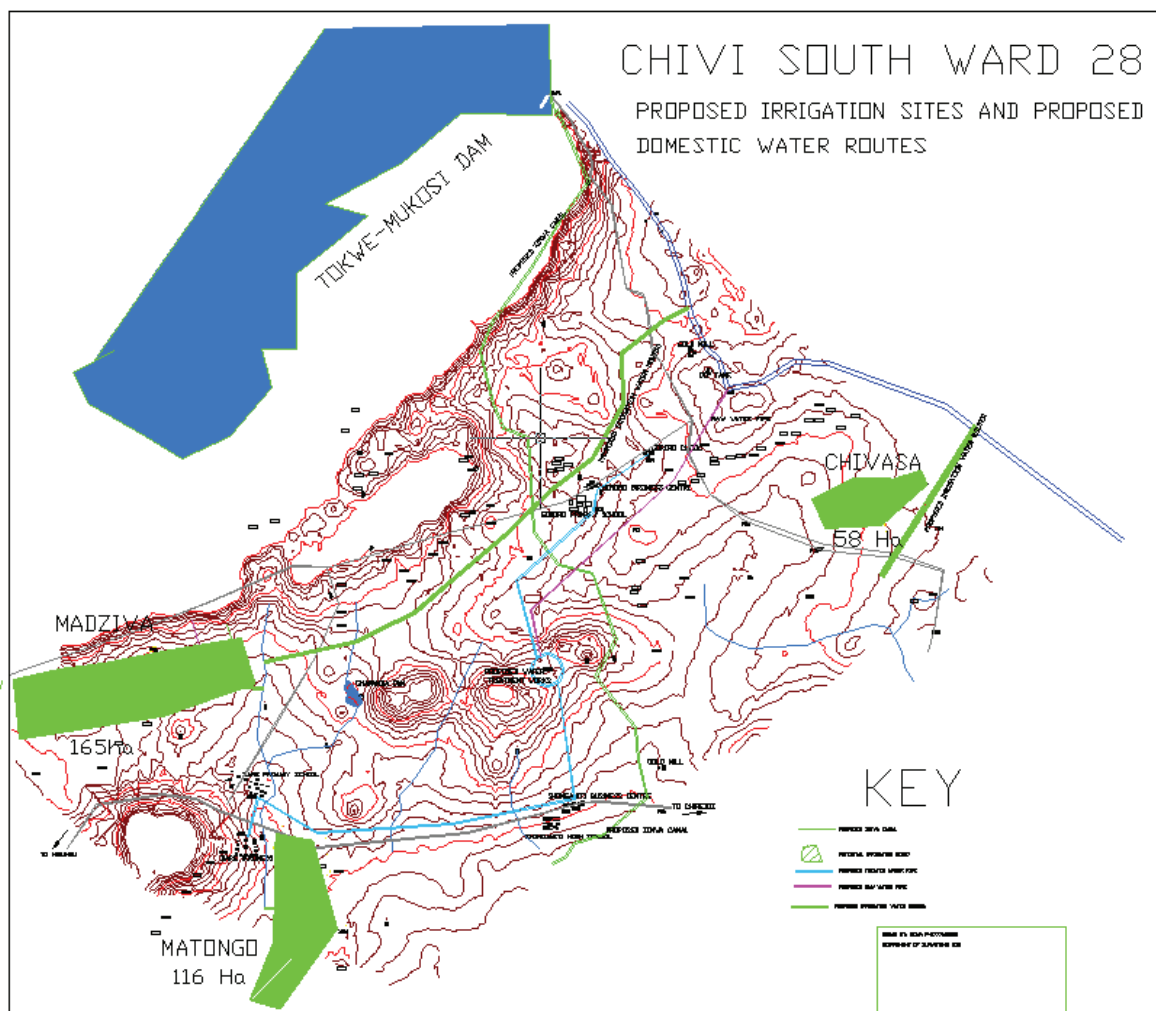
### Power generation

The installation of a perceived electricity generation project at the dam needs to be speeded up. It is more than five years since this project was conceived, but nothing has been done to get it off the ground. Availability of power generated at the dam to the immediate community will go a long way in powering the developmental projects in the area. The provincial manager for the Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company (ZETDC) indicated that the project is constrained by lack of funding.

## Agricultural development

The community is largely agricultural with almost all the households partaking in subsistence crop production and animal rearing. The construction of the dam in their area presented an opportunity to enhance and potentially commercialise their farming activities. They express interest in community-based projects in the area of irrigated agriculture and animal rearing. A total of approximately 400ha of potential irrigable land was identified by the ministry of agriculture.

While it is desirable that each individual household should be assisted with an irrigated field of their own, there are limitations in terms of the available funding for such projects. In this instance it would suffice to come up with community-based irrigation schemes in which an individual household can be allocated a portion to produce crops of their choice. There are a number of areas proposed as possible sites for the community schemes, including Madziva (165 Ha), Matongo (116Ha) and Chivasa (58Ha). (see the locality map Figure 2) There is an existing irrigation scheme at Charamba and Banga which could be augmented with the proposed plans. The Charamba Dam can also be fed from the Tugwi Mukosi Dam to ensure perennial access to water resources. There is a lot of advocacy to push for the scheme to be put in certain areas for obvious personal reasons and benefits. The community members should engage with the authorities further through their extension officers over the proposed irrigation scheme. The community prefer different irrigation systems, including surface, drip or overhead systems. In addition, a variety of crops could be grown including beans, wheat, tomatoes, cabbages, potatoes, butternuts, onions, flowers and various fruit trees.



Currently, domestic animals which include cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats travel long distances to drink water from Tugwi River, especially during the dry winter season. It was suggested that watering points for animals be established in the community. This would reduce the distance animals and their herders have to travel to access drinking water.

## Project governance and funding

While the aspirations and hopes of the community members explored above are noble and feasible, there are a number of stakeholders involved. These include the Ward Development Committee, particularly, the Water Committee, government departments such as the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), the Department of Irrigation Development, and the Environmental Management Agency (EMA). The ward leadership should liaise with the various government departments and development agencies to spearhead developmental projects in the area. Once these projects have been discussed and agreed upon there is a need to source funds to carry out these projects. Potential funders identified include the Government of Zimbabwe and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

## Conclusions and recommendations

The construction of the Tugwi Mukosi Dam is a welcome development but it must not be associated with human suffering and deprivation. Instead, it should bring inclusive progress and positive transformation to societies by involving local structures, such as traditional leadership, government departments and development agencies, in the planning and implementation of development projects. To minimize negative social impact on and conflicts between the affected people and the responsible authorities this policy brief recommends the following to all stakeholders:

- Facilitation of free, prior and informed consent to ensure comprehensive and fair compensation for land lost by project-impacted people, improvements made and disruptions to their livelihoods, based on transparent valuation processes.
- Mainstreaming of impacts of development projects on vulnerable groups, such as women, girls and young children.
- Minimization of economic displacement of affected communities by conducting environmental and social

assessments and planning towards rehabilitating livelihoods and;

- Incorporation of community shareholding and profit sharing schemes.

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## Interviews

Insights were sought from the following people;

1. Zimbabwe Electricity Distribution Company provincial official
2. ZINWA Resident Engineer at Tugwi Mukosi Dam
3. National Parks official
4. Chief Nyajena
5. Chief Gororo
6. Residents in adjoining wards
7. Ward 28 Councillor- Mr Muzonikwa at Shongamiti Secondary School
8. Staff at Dare Primary School
9. Staff at Gororo Primary School

