



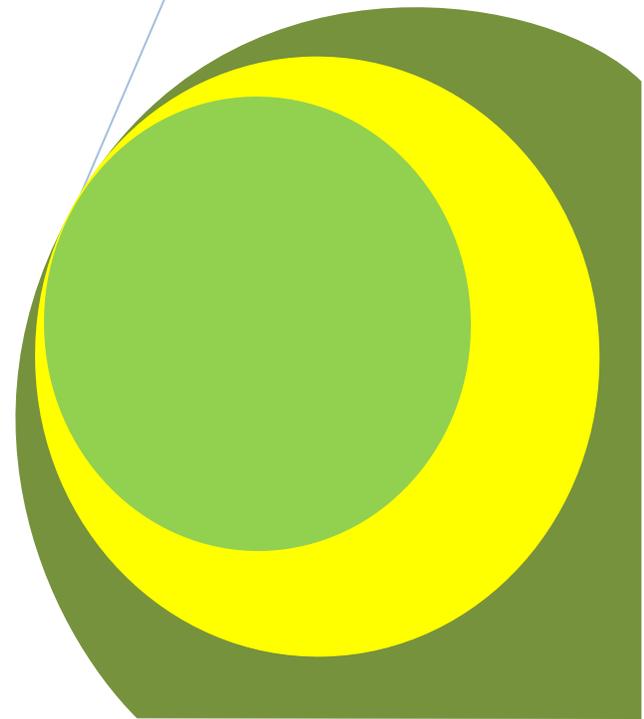
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Socio-cultural Implications and Livelihoods Displacement of the moved Communities as a result of the Construction of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam, Masvingo

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Research Article

Socio-cultural Implications and Livelihoods Displacement of the moved Communities as a result of the Construction of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam, Masvingo

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to examine the socio-cultural implications of forced migration and the changes in livelihoods as a result of the relocation paving way for the construction of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam in Masvingo. Qualitative methodology was used and unstructured interviews, focused group discussions and transect walks were used as data gathering instruments. The paper unveiled that in most cases when development is to take place, displacement also occurs especially for the nearby communities and this have profound consequences on the socio-cultural aspects of the communities concerned. It was discovered that as result of the construction of Tokwe Mukosi Dam, there has been disintegration of family tie, destruction of shrines, graves, and cultural values of the locals were not considered. Relocation has also resulted in changes in the livelihoods of the moved communities because some of the practices which used to sustain them were affected. Women were not spared by the effects of displacement because most of the projects like gardening which they used to practice were disturbed as well and they were left with many duties and responsibilities and had to think outside the box for them to earn out a living and to feed the family.

Keywords: socio-cultural, livelihoods, livelihood strategies, displacement, interface, social disintergration, vulnerability, development, cultural paradigms, gender.

INTRODUCTION

This research focused on the socio-cultural implications of forced migration as a result of the construction of Tokwe-Mukosi Dam. It will also examine some changes in livelihood strategies of migrated communities. Large populations around the world have been victims of forced migration programs mainly for the purpose of major technical developments. Most large forced dislocations of people do not occur in conditions of armed conflict or genocide but in routine everyday evictions to make way for development projects. Development generally does not benefit everyone equally and some indeed, for millions of people around the world, development has cost them their homes, their livelihoods, their health and even their lives. While most dams may be seen as to have achieved their main goals for which they were constructed for such as provision of hydro-electricity and irrigation, they have also caused severe socio-cultural hardships as well as displacement of livelihood strategies for the people who have to be moved. The suffering of those moved by dams and other development projects can be as severe and the numbers as large as those displaced by conflict or violence.

Literature review

According to Black (1999) forced migration is when a person is physically transported from a place of origin or a country and has no opportunity to escape from those transporting him. More so, forced migration can be viewed as the coerced movement of a person(s) away from their home or region. From a Marxist perspective, forced migrants have little or no choice and they are alienated from their cultural and social values. Leach et al, (1998) notes that the imposition of these orthodoxies and analyses over different environment and values can infringe not only on the

local's livelihoods but also on the cultural freedom through forced migration. The International Organization for Migration (2002) defines forced migration as any person who migrates to escape persecution, conflict, and repression, natural and human-made disasters that endanger their lives, freedom and livelihoods. Therefore, the word 'forced migration' can be used interchangeably with the terms resettlement, dislocation, eviction, displacement or forced displacement as the study progresses.

The World Commission on Large Dams (2000) noted that by the end of 2025, more than 80% of additional food production will come from irrigated land and dams will play an increased role in providing these. Dams control floods, improve irrigation, aid river navigation, provide hydro-power electricity and regulate water supply. The Human Right Watch (2009) noted that dam construction enhances forced migration which does not only lead to loss of property but also loss of social and cultural capital those villagers have accrued over generations. More so, forced migration forces its victims to undergo extreme psychological, physiological and socio-cultural stress as well as inadequate water supplies.

Instances of forced migration as a result of dam construction did not start in this area of study but they have been applied in various countries throughout the epochs of human history. The world's largest forced migration due to dam construction was recorded in various Asian countries such as China and India due to massive development in these countries. In China, 4 million people were forced to move from the areas around China's three gorges dams amid of the warnings of an environmental catastrophe (Gouging and Shaojun, 2000). Critics illustrate that although the dam was the world's largest H.E.P. project, it could cause huge environmental and social damages. There were conflicts over land shortages, deteriorating water quality and pollution and local people who were fishermen and farmers were directly affected by forced migration. It is also estimated that in China by the late 1980, more than 10million people were counted as reservoir resettles (Gouging and Shaojun, 2000).

In addition, in Thailand the construction of the Pak Mun Dam in 1994 in the north-eastern part of the country has displaced approximately 80 000 people (Khorn, 1999). Among those displaced 3,955 were fishermen and their livelihoods were seriously affected. Protests and negotiations continued over compensation for long-term loss of fisheries livelihoods. However, although the Thai government in 1995 approved payments of these fishermen as compensation for long-term loss of livelihoods, there were still protests and conflicts over livelihoods affected, social disturbances and cultural losses. More so, the construction of the Turucui Dam in Brazil has also displaced large numbers of people. The World Commission on Dams (2000) shows that more than 60 000 people were forced to migrate after the construction of the dam. In this project there was no adequate compensation of displaced communities and this project reduced downstream fish catches such that the fish-dependent economy of Cameta collapsed. More so, of the indigenous groups physically displaced only the Parakana people were resettled, the other groups that lost land to the dam was not considered for resettlement benefits.

Furthermore, although the largest numbers of forced migration by dams are in Asia and other European countries, dam building projects have also had negative impacts upon indigenous and peasant groups in Africa. The continent's largest troop of forced migration due to dam construction was recorded in Egypt in the construction of Aswan Dam. The construction resulted in resettlement of a hundred thousand people around the dam (Fahim, 1981). Local communities' livelihoods and their social settings became fragmented due to forced relocations. Another case was recorded in Ghana after the construction of the Volta Dam. Approximately 70 000 people were forced to migrate after the dam was completed and just like other cases, there was no adequate compensation and local people were infringed in poverty (Chambers, 1970). More so, the construction of the Kainji Dam in Nigeria also enhanced massive forced migration of indigenous communities. According to Cernea (1997), 44 000 people were forced to migrate after the construction was finished. More so, in North-Western Nigeria, the Bakalori dam was constructed in which reduced average flood levels leading to a fall in cropped area and to a quarter of the dropping dry- season cultivation as a component of their livelihood strategy. Hence, although dam construction may be seen as a desirable move towards national development the scale and scope of forced migration after dam construction may cause some social disturbances and loss of some cultural values.

Additionally, the construction of Highlands Water project in Lesotho has also enhanced forced relocations of local communities. According to studies by the United Nations (2010) this was the largest infrastructure project ever constructed in Africa. The project is a multi-dam scheme designed to export Lesotho's water to South Africa's industrial center of Gauteng province and to provide H.E.P. to Lesotho (U.N., 2010). Conversely, the project is expected to displace 27 000 people and the United Nations has admitted that despite close supervision and drafting of resettlement plans, the results on the social side are clearly distressing.

Forced migration as a result of dam construction did not only occur to other countries, rather the greatest move in Zimbabwe was recorded during the late 1950s when the Kariba hydro-electric power dam was constructed. The construction of this project displaced about 57 000 people both in Zimbabwe and Zambia which in turn lead to the breakdown of kinship ties among the Gwembe Tonga people (Colson, 1999). More so, close to Tokwe-Mukosi dam is the Manyuchi dam, which was constructed around late 1990s in Mwenezi district. The dam managed to meet

the purpose of its construction which was to increase irrigation agriculture in the dry areas of Mwenezi. The project also enhanced local people's livelihoods through community fishing schemes which were done under the CAMPFIRE project (Mukamuri, 1995). However, an estimated 20 000 households were forced to migrate by the project thereby excluding them from the water sources and imposing some social and cultural problems on them.

Locally, there are also various cases of forced migration both in rural and urban areas due to different development interventions. According to Tibaijuka (2005) Zimbabwean government carried out a forced migration program known as 'operation murambatsvina'. This in its broadest sense was a clean-up campaign aimed at reducing unnecessary uprooting of unwanted structures in towns. However, the way in which the program was implemented enhanced social and cultural disturbances to many people who were affected such as loss of housing, theft and prostitution (United Nations, 2006). This inevitably increased poverty in most urban households around the country and their livelihoods were also affected since there were no follow-ups after the program. More so, the establishment of the Diamond fields in Marange area in Manicaland province had also ensured forced migration of communities around the area. Although there was good property assessment mechanisms in this project and local communities benefited through provision of tapped water and electricity, there are also other non-retrievable losses such as ancestral graves and ritual sites. Additionally, recently there is the establishment of the Ethanol Power plant in Chisumbanje area in Chipinge which had also lead to forced resettlement of many communities around this area. This is the largest ethanol plant in Africa and in economic terms it is a sustainable project but there are many social and cultural implications associated with such developments. Thus, it can be justifiable to conduct a research focusing on such issues.

Moreover, the rivers Tokwe and Mukosi have also enhanced community migration through the construction of Tokwe-Mukosi Dam. The discovery of the dam was done way back by the colonial government as a result of the good catchment area offered by the intersection of these two rivers. Plans for construction started in 1998 but they stopped for a while due to financial constraints and commensurate again early this year. The motive behind this project is to generate electricity for Masvingo province as well as water for irrigation to south-eastern low-veld estates that is, Triangle, Hippo valley, Mwenezana and Mkwesine. The dam is located 80km south of Masvingo town. However, some calls by developmental practitioners to carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (E.I.A.) before the project is implemented have emerged with massive restructuring of the society and communities around the dam. Therefore the purpose of the study was to examine the socio-cultural implications of forced migration and the changes in livelihood strategies as a result of the relocation of the surrounding community.

Statement of the Problem

Development from a larger perspective and economic view in particular is significant for the betterment of the country as a whole. However, most large development interventions may tend to marginalize small communities both socially and culturally. Tools of inclusion and exclusion usually become the evil serpents bedeviling many development projects. It is somehow common knowledge that whenever there is development resettlement is likely to take place. The extent in which communities were excluded in enjoying proceeds from most projects, their cultural values being undermined and their social life and livelihoods being disturbed through forced migration to distant areas, become an interesting area in this research. There are mixed feelings about the issue of being forced to migrate among the intended communities. Most development interventions foresee economic growth thereby sidelining the significance of local communities.

Objectives

1. To assess the socio-cultural implications of forced migration due to the construction of the Tokwe-Mukosi Dam.
2. To examine some changes in livelihood strategies of moved communities.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is a body of methods used in a particular activity. It describes and analyses methods in a research. This research was grounded on qualitative methodology on the account of its efficacy in providing people's own feelings from spoken words and observable phenomena on the implications faced by the moved individuals. Qualitative methodology is concerned with attempting to accurately describe, decode and interpret the occurring of phenomenon on their social contexts. Qualitative methodology describes problems from their contextual origin of those experiencing them in this case the ones faced with relocation. Such data gathering instruments as unstructured interviews, focused group discussions, historical documents, oral history and transect walks were used.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research was carried out in areas around the Tokwe-Mukosi dam which were relocated to various places around the country. Tokwe-Mukosi Dam is one of the largest inland water features in Zimbabwe which is located in Masvingo and Chivi south constituencies which is about 80km south of Masvingo town. It is at the confluence of Tokwe and Mukosi rivers and was pegged in the 1920s by the colonial government but its construction was stopped due to financial constraints. At full supply the reservoir will inundate approximately 9 600 ha as result about 3 000 families will need resettlement but the number will increase after its completion. The dam will yield 3 400 megalitres of water, with half of it expected to be sold to low veiled sugar estates and the rest will be used for the irrigation schemes planned. At least 2 500 ha of land will be under irrigation once the dam is completed. Some communities to be moved were allocated land in the low veiled areas of Chisase and Mpapa areas near Triangle. The sample was drawn from two communities that is, Zunga community in Chief Manjongo area and the other one from Chief Gororo area. People from these two communities were randomly relocated to different places at different times which in turn lead some to take negative perceptions towards the construction of the dam. The central government was the responsible authorities for the relocation, assessment of property and allocation of land to migrated communities.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Displacement, Social Disintegration and vulnerability

Evidence from the research findings indicates that forced migration causes a profound unraveling of existing patterns of social disintegration. When people are forcibly moved, production systems are dismantled, long-established residential communities and settlements are disorganized, while kinship groups and family systems are often scattered. The moved individuals said that forced relocation breaks down their family relations and disadvantages other vulnerable members of their families such as orphans and elders. Kinship ties which people surrounding Tokwe-Mukosi dam have been accrued through spending long periods staying together were often disturbed through forced relocation. They noted that as a result of the relocation some social connections were lost because they were relocated to different areas from some of their relatives and friends. It is also evidenced that life sustaining social networks that provide mutual support are rendered non-functional as a result of forced migration. Formal and informal associations and self-organized services are wiped out by the sudden scattering of their membership. The respondents noted that they used to have their community gardens (*mishandirapamwe*) as well as some credit clubs (*mikando*) which they had established as a result of mutual trust which had developed as a result of staying together for a long time in the community. This entails that forced displacement destroys local people's social networks which usually act as social safety nets in providing social security to local people in times of uncertainties such as drought, hunger and death. These social networks ranges from extended family members, church members, friends and village neighbors and their significance was undermined due to the displacement of some members. It has also been observed that the relocation program at Tokwe-Mukosi was done randomly, that is people were not moved as collectives such that there might be extended family breakdowns which was acting as safety nets to various members. Therefore, forced migration might tear apart the existing social fabric, leading to socio-cultural disarticulation.

Traditional management systems tend to lose their leadership as a result of forced relocation. The dismantling of households and villages after the resettlement program destroys some traditional leadership. People from Tokwe-Mukosi dam were relocated to places which already have their traditional leaders such as Chisase and Mpapa areas and they were randomly displaced such that they now no longer reside as groups or collectives which can fall under one authority. Local authorities in the area complained that the relocation exercise has affected their powers because now they are stripped off their duties because their people have been moved to different areas where they are now under some authorities. There are risks of power dynamics due to the manner in which the resettlement program of Tokwe-Mukosi is being implemented. Those in power in areas surrounding the dam may find it difficult to devalue their power to new leaders since they have been in power for a long period. As a result, forced migration may exacerbate conflicts and power dynamics among resettled communities.

It is also imperative to note that it is not only traditional authorities that tend to be affected by forced relocation but rather modern administrative authorities such as Wadcos, Vidcos, and Councilors and to some extent even Members of Parliaments (M.P) because their constituencies are now reduced in size. This was revealed by the respondents who said that all community wards have been destroyed and there are no Councilors and Vidcos who can be transferred from one place to the other. Thus, these authorities experience same feelings to those of traditional leaders in relation to the losses of their power due to forced migration. Local authorities have experienced some form of social discontinuity as a result of displacement of its communities to pave way for the construction of the Tokwe-Mukosi dam.

Evidences from research findings revealed that children as a social group were also deprived their social wellbeing due to forced migration. Most researches on relocation look at adult welfare but not focusing on the sustainability of future generations such as school children. The relocation program at Tokwe-Mukosi dam displaced local schools such as Zunga Primary School and Neruvanga High School which will disturb the education of local children but all compensation is channeled to their parents with no financial support to cater for the education of these children. One respondent notes that these schools are supposed to be moved and our children have not been to school because we are waiting to move with them. Those who bear the costs are often poor, vulnerable or unrepresented such as future generations. It has also been observed that schools at the destination areas are not developed in terms of infrastructure as compared to those at their original places. Therefore, children were socially marginalized by the forced relocation program at Tokwe-Mukosi dam.

Development and the class of cultural paradigms

The relocation programme was also criticized by the respondents for failing to take into consideration the cultural values of the indigenous/local peoples. In most African societies people value the graves of their ancestors and they believe that all the good luck comes from the ancestors hence should stay close to their graves. The respondents complained that the programme has excluded the cultural values and made the graves valueless and they were exhumed. The moved individuals complained about the history of their families being distorted as a result of the fact that their children will be distanced from their ancestors. Therefore, there was a clash of cultural paradigms and no clear interface situations at Tokwe-Mukosi resettlement program since local people's cultures, values and beliefs were sidelined in the project.

From the findings it emerges that forced migration destroys cultural heritages such as temples, shrines and sacred elements of the landscape, artefacts and buildings and it may also lead to the submergence and degradation of archeological resources such as burial sites and architectural elements. Architectural elements may be part of the cultural life of local communities or they may predate the arrival of people currently inhabiting the dam site. There were also high risk of the destruction of burial sites, shrines, temples and the exhumation of human bodies at the area of study. From the fieldwork conducted, conflicting perceptions can be seen in that the construction of Tokwe-Mukosi dam does not coincide with local people's morals and cultural values. Most elders revealed that their rain making ceremonies (*mitoro*) together with their sacred mountains were being destroyed by the dam.

There were also disturbances in churches and temple sites which is associated with the process of forced relocation. People from Tokwe-Mukosi were distanced from their traditional belief systems and exposed to new life worlds which are alien to their primitive forms of living. This was strengthened by some religious sect leaders who said that relocation has destroyed their sect and this is so because various church members were displaced and their places of worship (*masowe*) which are mountains surrounding were also destroyed.

Displacement and destruction of livelihood strategies

Various types of knowledge, including ideas about oneself, other people and the context and social institutions are important in understanding social interfaces. Long (1992) notes that knowledge is present in all social situations and is often entangled with power relations and the distribution of resources. According to Long (1992) knowledge is defined as a cognitive and social construction that results from and is constantly shaped by the experiences, encounters and discontinuities that emerge at the points of intersection between different actors. In this regard, the respondents lamented that they all know that their destination places were good for cattle ranching but they were not given transport and transfer documents to transfer their cattle and these are part of the resources of livelihoods. It was also observed that some livestock are dying on their way to destination places because of long distances and resettled people from Tokwe-Mukosi were not given assistance from the veterinary department to move their animals. Chambers (1983) posits that although people's local lived experiences are vital for fruitful social interventions in rural communities, in most cases rural poverty is unperceived by interventionists who think they have all the necessary knowledge. For this reason, development practitioners at Tokwe-Mukosi relocation program were also expected to provide transport and transfer documents and listen to people's perceptions on how the program should be implemented in order to reduce future poverty of resettled communities.

The study showed that displacement of people may also lead to livelihood displacement and increased vulnerability of local communities. Most resettled communities were exposed to various shocks, risks and stresses during the relocation program. Most resettlement programs have predominantly focused on the process of physical relocation rather than the economic and social development of the displaced and other negatively affected people in terms of their losses in livelihood strategies. According to Scoones (1998), livelihoods can be exposed to various stresses, risks and shocks such as drought which can increase the vulnerability context of various livelihoods. The main risks to affected people range from the loss of livelihood and income sources such as arable land, common

property resources such as fisheries, ground and surface water. They said they used to grow vegetables, and fruits such as bananas, mangoes and guavas because of their proximity to water sources and they sell to people from different places in order to earn a living. This is so because Chivi is a drought prone area where agriculture production is not viable and these people resorted to market gardening along riverbanks since some of them like Dange River are perennial streams. Thus, their livelihoods have been sustained by such practices and the coming in of relocation program may pose a threat to their livelihoods since it may take some time for them to be used to new environments.

Most resettlement programs are done by central government officials who mainly attach monetary values or compensation on tangible goods such as buildings, trees and other infrastructures but little to no emphasis will be placed on non-tangible losses such as livelihoods disturbances. The displaced also allude to the fact that they used to practice fishing in the nearby rivers and could use the fish for both consumption and for commercial (selling fish to others). The studies shows that forced migration may impoverish communities to be moved because of the changes in livelihood strategies.

It is observed that different actors experience different losses from the relocation program at Tokwe-Mukosi dam. There are also losses of trade linkages which locals have obtained through staying at their original places for long periods of time. The study shows that trade linkages between producers and their customer base were interrupted as a result of forced migration. They alluded that they sell their fruits and vegetables to various people and some come as far as Beitbridge. This shows that a clear trade route has been established between local producers and foreign customers such that when they are moved that linkage will be interrupted. As a result, this may exacerbate poverty and vulnerability on local people's livelihoods.

Displacement and gender issues

Evidence from research findings reveals that women's livelihoods were also affected by forced migration. In general, the issue of gender disparities in resettlement operations has been ignored in literature and this study may be significant since it managed to explore such disparities. Dams affect men and women in different ways and women are marginalized entities who shoulder the ordeal of displacement far more intensely. Women's livelihoods are most affected by forced migration because most of them are driven from the environment and in most cases compensation is given on heads of households which are men. Women's nutritional gardens were destroyed by the dam and their burdens in terms of water fetching have been increased by being relocated to dry areas. Mostly women were affected in the sense that they are mostly the ones responsible for gardening and their gardens were affected by the relocation which means their livelihoods were also affected. Also this will increase their burden since in the new areas they are suppose to identify other sources of livelihoods so as to bring food home. This shows that their livelihoods were affected while at the same time their workloads were also increased. Mutopo and Chiweshe (2012:6) argued that "displacement had put women in a position of double jeopardy as they have to increasingly engage in livelihood diversification. This is in tandem with the views of the Women in Development critics, who noted that most development projects instead of ameliorating poverty have increased women's workloads.

CONCLUSION

The paper concluded that although the idea to construct a dam in such a place is noble and ideal, the programme has also affected the moved communities in ways that vary from one individual to another. The moved were affected socially, culturally, politically as well as economically. Most of the respondents noted that the relocation has distanced them from the activities which they used to rely on in order to earn a living. The research also concluded that women were also affected as a result of the relocation because their money spinning syndicates were disturbed as people were now going to different areas hence finding new members to start *mukando*. It was also noted that relocation has caused family breakups as extended families are vanishing due to displacement. However conclusions were drawn that whenever such programmes are being done there is need to consider the needs of the locals being affected because they are the agents of development no passive recipients of development.

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