Tokwe-Mukosi Floods: A Conundrum of Perspectives
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Abstract
The events that followed the Tokwe-Mukosi floods and the resultant displacements have been subjected to a multiplicity of analysis. The analysis has led to the emergency of an assortment of narratives ranging from the livelihoods perspective, internal displacement perspective, conspiracy perspective, political perspective and the legal perspective. This conceptual paper offers a consolidated analysis of these various perspectives on the Tokwe-Mukosi floods. This article is based on secondary data analysis on research by various scholars on the Tokwe-Mukosi floods and their impact. It concludes that displacements can be studied and analysed from various perspectives as revealed by the plethora of narratives on the Tokwe-Mukosi floods and subsequent displacements.

Key Words: Tokwe-Mukosi, livelihoods perspective, internal displacement perspective, conspiracy perspective, political perspective, legal perspective

1.0 Introduction
The discourse on internal displacement in general and the Tokwe Mukosi floods and subsequent relocations to Chingwizi has drawn attention from various scholars and resultantly a multiplicity of perspectives have emerged. Various and more often than not conflicting narratives have emerged analysing the Tokwe Mukosi floods and the eventual relocation to Chingwizi. The Tokwe Mukosi floods have been interrogated from the livelihoods perspective (Tarisayi, 2014; Mutangi & Mutari, 2014; Rusvingo, 2014); the legal perspective (Nyamafufu, 2014); the conspiracy perspective (Mugabe, 2014) and the political perspective (Tarisayi, 2015; Mtimba, 2014) as well as introduce the Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) perspective to the Tokwe-Mukosi phenomena. Thus, this paper seeks to interrogate these various perspectives that have been proffered and come up with a consolidated narrative on the Tokwe Mukosi floods.

2.0 Background
Tokwe-Mukosi dam is in Masvingo Province at the boundary of Chivi and Masvingo Rural districts. In January-February 2014, Zimbabwe’s enormous Tokwe-Mukosi Dam basin flooded following higher than normal rains. Tarisayi (2014:02) states, “The heavy rains and subsequent floods adversely affected twelve villages, explicitly Chekai, Jahwa, Zifunzi, Mharadzano, Chkandigwa and Vhomo in Nemauzhe communal lands; and Tagwirei, Ndove, Matandizvo, Chikosi, Mashenjere and Nongera in Neruvanga communal lands”. The Tokwe Mukosi floods were declared a national disaster by the President of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Robert Mugabe in February 2014. Human Rights Watch (2015:01) states, “President
Robert Mugabe immediately declared the floods a national disaster and appealed to the international community for US$20 million to help relocate and provide humanitarian assistance to those affected". The victims of the 20 000 Tokwe Mukosi floods were relocated by the Zimbabwe National Army and the Civil Protection Unit (CPU) to Chingwizi in Mwenezi district.

2.0 Emerging Perspectives

2.1 The Livelihoods Perspective

The main perspective that has been most pursued in relation to the Tokwe Mukosi floods pertains to the implications of the floods on the livelihoods of the internally displaced people. Jayaratney (2007) vies livelihoods as entailing basically the capabilities, assets and activities required for living. Livelihoods can be classified in terms of individual and community; individual livelihoods include jobs, works or sources of income, activities that provide income to live on (such as farming; fishing and trading) (Jayaratney, 2007). While, Scoones (1998) avers that livelihoods can be exposed to various stresses, risks and shocks such as drought which can increase vulnerability context of livelihoods. It follows that the livelihoods of the internally displaced people relocated at Chingwiza have been exposed to the shock of floods which has led to their vulnerability.

The livelihoods perspective reveals that the livelihoods of the people of the Tokwe Mukosi were adversely affected by the floods (Tarisayi, 2014; Rusvingo, 2014; Mutangi & Mutari, 2014). Among the livelihoods that were affected include subsistence farming, market gardening, art and craft as well as petty trade. Thus literature reveals that while most livelihoods were affected negatively remittances have actually increased as the people of Tokwe-Mukosi have increasingly become dependent on external support for sustenance. Hence, it can be concluded within the livelihoods perspective that the livelihoods of the people were negatively implicated. However, it can be revealed that the livelihoods perspective falls short of exposing the effects of the losses incurred during the course of relocation.

2.2 Internal Displacement Perspective

The other alternative perspective to the Tokwe-Mukosi floods and subsequent relocation to Chingwizi is the internal displacement perspective. The construction of dams has led to involuntary displacement and resettlement of an estimated 40 to 80 million people across the world (Robinson, 2003). The floods in February 2014 in Tokwe Mukosi resulted in about 20 000 people being displaced from their homes (Nyamafufu, 2014). An internally displaced persons (IDP) according to the Kampala Convention is a person forced to flee or to leave their homes/ place of residence (Iwabukuna, 2011). Thus according people displaced by the Tokwe-Mukosi floods can be classified as IDPs. Internal displacement does not occur as a result of individual ‘choice per se and constitutes a situation of non-freedom (in terms of agency and opportunity as IDPs have “been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes”) (UNOCHA, 2004:01).

Cernea (1997; 2003) point out that DIDR negatively impacts on the living standards
and livelihood outcomes of displaced communities. In addition, it can be revealed within this perspective that the most vulnerable in society such as the disabled, the elderly and children are the most affected by DIDR leading to their impoverishment (Cernea, 2003). While, Maldonado (2003) argues that effects of forced displacement are not confined to just the physical relocation of people, it also impacts on people’s lives economically, physically, culturally and socially leading to their impoverishment. Therefore, it can be reasoned within this perspective that DIDR due to the construction of the Tokwe-Mukosi dam has had wide ranging impacts, cutting across all spheres of life of the people. Robinson (2003:06) states, “Impoverishment and disempowerment have rather been the rule than the exception with resettled people due to development projects”. This observation can be utilised to explain the impoverishment and disempowerment incurred by the people of Tokwe-Mukosi due to their displacement.

Michael Cernea constructed a model, known as the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model to analyse the effects of involuntary displacement that came as a result of major development projects (Robinson, 2003). Cernea’s model proposes that “the onset of impoverishment can be represented through a model of eight interlinked potential risks to displacement” (Cernea, 2003). These are landlessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and social disintegration. In addition, as asserted by Cernea (as cited in Turton, 2009:29), “some people enjoy the gains of development, while others bear its pains”. Hence, while communities around Tokwe-Mukosi dam and investors are going to enjoy the gains of the construction of the dam, the IDPs are bearing the pains due to displacement. Thus, based on Cernea’s model it can be revealed that the people of Tokwe-Mukosi have been impact in the eight dimensions due to the displacement.

2.3 The Legal Perspective

Another emerging narrative on the Tokwe-Mukosi floods can be referred to as the legal perspective. The legal perspective seeks to interrogate the Tokwe-Mukosi phenomena through an assessment of Zimbabwe’s adherence to various international conventions such as the African Union’s Convention on the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. Adebe (2011) avers that the African Convention on the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons also known as the Kampala Convention, due to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa. Giustiniani (2012) puts the number of IDPs around the world at 26 million of which 11 million in Africa.

Within the legal perspective, Nyamafufu (2014) reveals that the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) managed to adhere to some of the principles of the Kampala Convention such as Article 9 (2) (d) on the movement of IDPs to safe areas and the provision of basic services that include schools and health facilities for people at
Chingwizi. While it is worth noting that the government has adhered to the Kampala Convention in as far as provision of basic services these can be argued to fall short of the requirements. The schools that have been provided at Chingwizi are makeshift and thus do not meet the minimum requirements as espoused by the Kampala Convention.

In addition, the legal perspective also interrogates Zimbabwe’s adherence to Article 12 (2) of the Kampala Convention. Article 12 (2) of the Kampala Convention stipulates that state parties should establish an effective legal framework to provide just and fair compensation and other reparations due to IDPs. Rusvingo (2014) buttresses the legal by bringing to the fore that compensation for the affected households in Tokwe Mukosi was not adequate and fair and moreso was not received by a majority of households. Furthermore, the government can also be critiqued for failing to adhere to Article 9 (2) (c) of the Kampala Convention which stipulates that state parties should provide for special protection and assistance to the elderly, the disabled, people living with HIV and AIDS, expecting mother and vulnerable groups (Human Rights Commission, 2014). Hence, it can be argued that the government did not fully adhere to Article 9 (2) (c) as revealed by a study carried out by Tarisayi (2014) on the ramifications of the Tokwe Mukosi floods on disabled women. Thus, it can be concluded with the legal perspective to the Tokwe Mukosi floods that the government did not fully adhere to the Kampala Convention to a larger extent.

2.4 The Conspiracy Perspective

The other perspective to the Tokwe-Mukosi floods which is proving to be controversial is what can be termed the conspiracy perspective. Brotherton (2013:12) avers, “In terms of the context in which conspiracy theories exist, a conspiracy theory is an unverified and sensationalistic claim of conspiracy which contradicts a more plausible account”. The conspiracy perspective argues that the Tokwe-Mukosi were largely a man-made disaster. Mugabe (2014) argues that the government failed to heed the warning by engineers as it intended to cut corners in the construction of the Tokwe-Mukosi dam. In addition, the conspiracy perspective postulates that the dam was not supposed to fill-up in 2014 as the compacted rock-fill had not been lined with concrete face seal to make it water tight and it only filled up due to the insufficiency of the river diversion capacity (Mugabe, 2014). Thus, government’s failure to heed the advice of experts has been revealed by the conspiracy perspective.

In addition, within the conspiracy perspective it can be argued that the government was also complicit in not adequately planning the relocation of the people of Tokwe Mukosi. Oxfam (2014:03) states, “the Zimbabwean government was fully aware of the need for relocation of the 6393 households had chosen Mwenezi district as the relocation place at Chingwizi, Chisase and Masungula lands”. In addition, the Ministry of Lands can also be critiqued for failing to plan development of the relocation site and this was compounded by delay in the processing of compensation of the affected households (Oxfam, 2014:03).

The conspiracy perspective gained currency in the apparent privatization of a
national problem. Despite the President’s declaration of the Tokwe-Mukosi floods a national disaster, the private media and some non-state players were denied coverage and access to the victims. Takavarasha (n.d:06) government officials privatised this national problem by banning the private media from covering the national disaster. Takavarasha (n.d:07) further reveals that the government denied a catholic group’s request to film victims at Chingwizi transit camp. Hence, the conspiracy perspective argues if the government was neither complicit nor had nothing to hide then why did it ban media coverage.

2.5 Political Perspective

Another equally controversial perspective to the Tokwe Mukosi floods has also been submitted as a political perspective to the Tokwe Mukosi discourse. According to the political perspective, the plight of the people of Tokwe-Mukosi has largely been high jacked by political and anti-government forces bent on tarnishing the government’s image. The violence which erupted at Chingwizi, culminating in the burning of the Police Post and two police vehicles (Tarisayi, 2015) have been used to buttress the political perspective. Another variant dimension to the political perspective has also been forwarded by pro-government element arguing that the activism and militancy at Chingwizi were a product of political guidance and funding of opposition parties and figures. Thus, the government responded by blocking movement in and out of the camp, journalists were also forbidden from entering the camp as well as the launch of a joint police and army revenge blitz. Mtimba (2014) reveals that police and army personnel armed with AK 47 assault rifles left thousands without shelter, several wounded and over 300 flood victims arrested in the indiscriminate operation. Furthermore, the political perspective is buttressed by the submission by Charamba quoted by Zhangazha (2015), “the victims of the Tokwe Mukosi floods, like in the past have been confrontational to government, made unreasonable demands and allowed politicisation of their situation. They should be careful that they end up being another political football”. Thus, it can be revealed through this perspective that the plight of the victims of the Tokwe-Mukosi floods were manipulated for mileage by NGOs and political interests. This position is aptly buttressed by this researcher’s observation that one year after the disaster the vocal and advocacy NGOs and political interests have forsaken the victims. Hence, it can be argued that the militancy revealed by the burning of a police post and police vehicles as well as the disappearance of political interests which were purportedly advocating for the Tokwe Mukosi victims give eradicating to the political narrative to the Tokwe Mukosi discourse.

2.6 Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis it can be concluded that varying narratives have been proffered on the Tokwe Mukosi floods. Scholars, government and NGOs have pursued often conflicting narratives thus the lack the lack of consensus. Hence, it has been revealed by this paper that various perspectives can be utilised to interrogate
any phenomenon in general and the Tokwe-Mukosi floods in particular.

References

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