

Working Group on land and housing rights in Zimbabwe.

Date : 08 December 2022.

Press statement on the rising trend of threats of Displacement, arbitrary displacements and house demolitions threatening communities across Zimbabwe.

We, the undersigned civic and community-based organizations, Organized under the banner of the Working group on Land and housing rights in Zimbabwe.

Representing communities-of-place across the length and breadth of Zimbabwe-threatened or impacted by arbitrary displacements and illegal evictions.

Distressed by the worsening social, economic, cultural conditions of communities displaced from ancestral and communal lands and relocated without negotiated and binding Compensation and relocation agreements with government and private investors,

Alarmed by the growing land hunger for housing and agrarian purposes in Zimbabwe, which is disproportionately affecting youth and women as evidenced by the ballooning national land allocation waiting list of 260 000 for agricultural land and an exponentially rising urban housing backlog of 2 million housing units.

Deeply concerned by revelations that Zimbabwe is a national of lodgers as almost half (43%) of houses are occupied by lodgers according to 2022 ZIMSTAT National population and housing census.

United in our common desire to promote secure land tenure and enhanced access to land for housing and productive purposes for all in Zimbabwe:

Guided by the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013, specifically section 74 which expressly guarantees freedom from arbitrary eviction, stating that:

“No person may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished without an order of court made after considering all relevant circumstances”

Hereby make the following statement concerning threats of displacement as contained in Notices of evictions issued to the following communities together with communities trapped in protracted situations of displacement:

- 1500 families displaced by diamond mine in Chiadzwa area to Arda Transau without restitution
- Over 4000 families in Chiadzwa diamond protected area threatened with displacement
- An estimated 12 000 ethnic Shangaan community members in Chilonga and Masivamele in Chiredzi district
- The Lubimbi community threatened with displacement by Lake Gwayi-Shangaan.

- The Community in Dinde- Hwange threatened with displacement by Coal-mining by Chinese companies.
- 300 families in Chegutu east threatened with displacement to make way for platinum mining.
- 40 families from Buhera district displaced by Chinese lithium mining company without a negotiated compensation and relocation agreement.
- Dozens of families from Kaseke and Chindenga in Mutoko district threatened with displacement by Black granite Chinese mining firm.
- The community in Chinyamukwaka in Chipinge being displaced by sugarcane agribusiness.
- Villagers in Muzarabani threatened with displacement by oil prospecting, drilling and mining.

And many other communities across Zimbabwe.

1. We call on the government of Zimbabwe, as a member of the family of United Nations to respect international legal frameworks guiding internal displacements and domesticate the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements and the African Union's Kampala Convention of 2009.
2. We call on the government to take urgent measures to assess the vulnerability of Internally displaced communities- or people caught up in situations of displacement and urgently provide humanitarian needs and protection, including emergency shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical services.
3. We call on the Government of Zimbabwe durably address internal displacements in Zimbabwe by expediting the enactment of a compensation and relocation framework as mandated by Chapter 66 of the Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy (ZNHSP).

The envisaged Compensation and relocation framework will institutionalize engagement between displacement threatened communities, investors and government based on the following four human-rights based principles which are the cornerstones of both the UNGPID and Kampala convention:

- A. Free prior and informed consent- Communities of place must be freely informed and participate in government's decision to compulsorily acquire and reallocate land on which they are residing and working on. Free implies the absence of coercion, intimidation or manipulation. Prior means that consent is obtained in advance of the development project that will result in physical or economic displacement.

Consent implies that the affected people have agreed to the development project that will result in their physical or economic displacement, as well as the compensation process and package negotiated with them.

B. Fair compensation- Compensation through financial payments, replacement of structures and assets or any other support received by the affected people due to the displacement.

C. Relocation before project implementation- Government must consult and agree with communities of place on a resettlement and compensation plan and budget which must be implemented ahead of the project displacing communities of place.

D. Respect of basic human rights prior, during and after displacement- Government and investors must ensure that the rights of communities of place are respected and promoted prior, during and after displacement.

4. We urge government to Establish a dedicated government agency to manage displacements and internally displaced people and provide effective grievance redress and feedback mechanisms that facilitate engagement between the central government officials/institutions, local government, capital/investors and the targeted communities in cases of disputes and human rights violations before during and after displacements.
5. Government, investors and communities of place threatened with development induced displacements negotiate and sign legally binding relocation and compensation agreements. They must be clear guidelines for fair assessment valuation and compensation for affected households including emotional and psychological harm losses of social and economic infrastructure such as roads schools clinic cultural sites such as shrines and graveyards cultural
6. Prioritize the protection of the land rights of indigenous minority ethnic groups.
7. Fast-track land allocations for agricultural purposes with target of reducing the national land allocation list for agricultural land from 260 000 to 100 000 in the next 12 months and clearing it within two years.
8. Simplify and streamline procedures for applying and accessing agricultural land and housing stands.
9. Upgrade offer letter held by beneficiaries of land reform and graduate into 99-year leases.
10. Revive the community share ownership schemes and ensure that communities displaced by national infrastructure developments projects and private capital investment projects benefit through shares and equity in companies occupying their land.

11. Reform the Gazetted Lands (Consequential provisions) Act (Chapter 20:28) - to include protections against arbitrary evictions and criminalization of continued occupation of gazetted land by communities gives notices of evictions. Incarcerating indigenous people for continuing to reside on ancestral land is a glaring travesty of justice given that citizens are not given any written commitments for relocation and compensation. The jailing of people who continue to occupation of Gazetted land after the expiry of 3-month notice period is tyrannical and has racist parentage!
12. Finally, we call on communities, households and citizens threatened or impacted by displacements to reach out and publicize their plight, name and shame entities and personalities behind their persecution, mobilize and organize for secure land tenure, and enhanced access to land, compensation before relocation and project inception. We also call on citizens facing land hunger- denied access to land for housing and agrarian purposes to join this movement by sharing contact details and circumstances to enable informed advocacy. As the working group on land and housing rights, We hereby launch a campaign against displacements and urge all affected citizens to reach out on social media using the following hashtags:

#IndawoyamiZW

#Chitakatakachahina

#Ndinodapangu

And on our whatsapp platforms 0776 358 933.

Signed by and on behalf of the following organisations:

Arda Transau Community Trust

Manyame Social Solidarity (MASOSO)

Mazowe Evant Farm Community Trust

Public Information Rights Forum (PIRF)

Centre for Research and Development (CRD)

Masvingo Centre for Research and Development (MACRAD)

Community Alliance for Human Settlements in Zimbabwe (CAHSZ).