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Tragic Injustice in Dinson Iron and Steel Relocations in Manhize



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Elderly inhabitants succumb to protracted intimidation to consent to relocation agreements

On 8 November 2024, Ministry of Lands officials railroaded elderly inhabitants of Inhoek farm to consent to relocation by signing compensation agreement forms. The farmers requested time with the documents to consult and have their concerns addressed before consenting to mutually beneficial agreements. The request was shot down. Some of the elderly farmers requested permission to take pictures of the consent forms and send them to their children on WhatsApp platforms to interpret the terms of the agreements and assist them in making informed consent. The officers would not hear any of that according to farmers interviewed by CRD. Farmers were warned that resisting signing consenting to the documents forms would be regarded as going against the government. Farmers who interpreted the compensation forms feared that by consenting, Dinson would evict them from Ihoek farm to a relocation destination that had not been adequately prepared. They also realised that the compensation figures especially on land preparation were not sustainable. Needless to mention the evaluation exercise had excluded some of their assets for compensation, said the farmers. The arrival of the dreaded Central Intelligence Officers(CIOs) at the meeting instilled fear in them and led the majority of them to append signatures to the documents. Sources claimed that one of the CIOs confronted 85 year old Tapfumaneyi Earnest Mugoni for resisting relocating to the new site when his new house had already been completed.

After the meeting, farmers led officials from the Ministry of Lands on a tour of the relocation site where they were shown houses that had developed cracks. The officers assured farmers that the Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities will come to assess the severity of the cracks and address their concerns. The Ministry has yet to send officers to the relocation site. The next day officials from the Ministry of Lands returned to the village to deliver consent agreements to the farmers that had been countersigned by Dinson and the Ministry of Mines.5 farmers who initially resisted signing until their grievances had been addressed were pressured into signing. Narrating his ordeal to CRD Mr Ernest Ruziye aged 70 said, ***"I was forced to sign against my will. On the first day, I refused to sign because I did not agree that the houses I built at my homestead were going to be compensated with just one main house at the new relocation site. I took Chihera to my homestead hoping that he would appreciate my concern but he did not care at all. He told me that others had already signed and I was not going to win a fight against the government just by***

myself. So I was forced to sign and one of his officers signed as a witness”

Despite 40 years of improvements on allocated farms in Manhize farmers did not receive compensation for loss of land. A paltry US\$ 1500 was awarded to farmers to prepare land for farming at the relocation destination. Before the seizure of their land by Dinson in 2021, farming had been their only source of livelihood. They produced high yields from decades of feeding the soil with organic fertilisers. Popularly known as “pamavisi” along Chivhu Mvuma road as a result of high watermelon yields, the farmers also derived income from tobacco, cotton and market gardening. As a result of fertile soil farmers realised between 4 to 10 tonnes of maize per annum. Because of high yields, the Grain Marketing Board(GMB) had established a mini depot in the area. Farmers also derived income from cattle breeding.

In August 2023 Ministry of Lands officials undertook an evaluation exercise for 22 farmers earmarked for relocation to ascertain the value of properties for compensation. They promised to return with the results in 30 days for farmers to negotiate the compensation packages. 7 months later, in May 2024 farmers wrote a letter to the Ministry reminding them to feedback on the evaluation exercise. They also requested that the Ministry of National Housing inspect the houses Dinson was constructing for them at the relocation site. Through monitoring farmers observed that Dinson was using brick force sparingly for reinforcing the walls. They also observed that their builders were using 4,5 inches instead of the standard thickness of 8 to 10 inches recommended in constructing exterior walls for housing. In the letter, the farmers also pleaded with the government for protection against dehumanising treatment by Dinson such as the seizure of farming land and loss of income and opening of mining roads in their village exposing people to excessive dust pollution. They also raised concerns that they were not being consulted with relocation planning as affected parties. The letter was also copied to the Office of the President and Cabinet and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The responsible government ministries acknowledged receipt of the letter but did not respond to concerns raised by farmers. Stalked with hunger and inhuman treatment the entire village rose to a demonstration against Dinson on 14 June 2025. They blocked Dinson trucks demanding an audience with Dinson mining management. They demanded compensation for loss of production on their farms backdated to 2021 and a food basket of at least US\$500 for each family to sustain their lives whilst awaiting relocation. They also demonstrated against unbearable dust pollution exposing them to the risk of respiratory diseases such as pneumoconiosis, tuberculosis and other related illnesses.

After the demonstrations, Mvuma District Development Coordinator(DDC) Mr Jorum Chimedza, accompanied by CIOs, Dinson Mine official, Chief Chirumhanzi, ZANU PF District Party chairman, police and other officials descended on the village and denounced the farmers for holding a demonstration. They were labelled opposition supporters bent on tarnishing President Mnangagwa's vision of attaining an upper middle income economy by 2030. The community liaison committee with Dinson was threatened with disappearance if they ever engaged Dinson again. A new committee led by ZANU PF District Coordinating Committee(DCC) member was appointed to liaise with Dinson on behalf of the farmers. Villagers were banned from holding gatherings. A self imposed village head trusted by Dinson and CIOs was tasked with reporting to CIOs in Mvuma members of the community disobeying the ban. Community leaders of the former liaison committee were threatened with death by CIOs on the sidelines of the meeting. They were told to have their final moments with their families before reporting to CIO offices the next day without fail. The leaders went into hiding after the meeting. The community has been living in terror, under surveillance from menacing state security agencies.

Landless children of permit holders and their families were allocated small plots on state land at Inhoek farm popularly known as "Magada" by their councillor and traditional leadership in 2016. In 2022 Dinson was forced to meet the cost of relocation for 14 families to Rusununguko farm from Magada area of Inhoek farm. According to farmers interviewed by CRD, the District Development Coordinator(DDC) of the area called for over 32 families settled in Magada to return to their family plots after Rusununguko relocations. In February 2023, 7 women with infants (1 month, 1 year and 1 year 3 months) from Magada were arrested for illegally occupying state land and detained at Mvuma police station. These landless families have been subjected to intimidation over their continued occupation of state land at Inhoek farm in Manhize. The open ended lease awarded by the government to Dinson covers 12 270 hectares of land in Manhize occupied by over 800 traditional families spread over 10 villages. These inhabitants were relocated from their ancestral communal lands in 1984. Already government has approved a master plan for the development of a town in Manhize. A lot of these families will be forcibly removed without adequate compensation as already demonstrated in Rusununguko and Singleton relocations. The arrests and consistent intimidation of farmers already affected by Dinson mining developments reflect embedded priorities of political elites in Dinson investments in Manhize.

Government declared houses built by Dinson at Singleton unsafe for habitation.

Dinson initially rejected the honour of reconstructing the houses

The Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities condemned 6 houses constructed for farmers at Singleton farm by Dinson. Dinson forcibly removed the farmers from Trydo Farm where iron was discovered and settled them at Singleton Farm near Chivhu in November 2022. According to affected farmers at Singleton, the DDC wrote a letter to the Permanent Secretary for Provincial Affairs and Devolution in December 2024 alerting him that Dinson had categorically rejected to honour the agreement. The government had obligated Dinson to reconstruct the houses that they poorly built as compensation for the houses farmers lost at Trydo farm. The DDC affirmed to the Permanent Secretary that the houses were substandard and that Dinson must be required to reconstruct standard houses. According to the farmers, the DDC also requested the Permanent Secretary to urgently request temporary tents from Dinson for families to use as accommodation since they are almost living in the open. CRD observed that substandard houses built by Dinson at both Singleton and Rusununguko have roofs that were leaking and widening cracks on exterior walls as a result of inadequate reinforcement and poor construction practices. CRD noticed that affected farmers were being exposed to respiratory illnesses and their properties were being destroyed by rainfall leakages into their houses. CRD recently made a follow up with affected communities at Singleton and was informed that Dinson had agreed to reconstruct the houses after the rain season. The company agreed after the intervention of the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution according to sources at Singleton. Dinson has however not provided temporary shelter for the affected families.

Land loss and stalking hunger

Since 2021 Dinson has been unilaterally dispossessing local inhabitants of their farming land without compensation and alternative land of equal quality. Farmers were removed from fertile land at Inhoek farm and settled on rocky and sandy soils that were undesirable for crop production. The land requires higher fertilizer rates that the subsistence families cannot afford. At the same time, land clearance carried out by Dinson at Rusununguko was inadequate to prepare land for productive farming. There was no land clearance for families that were displaced to Singleton. Victims of land loss, and inadequate land preparation at Inhoek farm, Singleton, Runyararo and Mushenjere villages are facing acute food shortages and hunger. A lot of them can no longer afford to meet other

basic needs for their families such as medication and education. At Singleton and Runyararo families were forced to relocate without compensation funds to enable them to prepare new land for farming. At Inhoek farm farmers have lost 4 seasons of farming after Dinson seized their land. Dinson is providing an upkeep allowance of US\$200 until families are relocated. The money cannot sustain basic livelihood requirements for the affected farmers.²¹ farmers set to be relocated to Sable farm have been compensated a paltry US\$ 1500 for land preparation. The money will not sustain both livelihood and land preparation costs. The net effect on victims of relocation is impoverishment, despair and loss of lives.

Access to Service Delivery

At singleton, families have been fetching water for domestic use and their livestock at another farm several kilometres away because all 6 boreholes drilled by Dinson had dried up. Due to increased rainfall and rising water tables, families are currently drawing water from shallow wells they have dug. Information availed to CRD by relocated families indicated that water surveyors had recommended drilling of up to 120 metres to secure reliable groundwater for the community. However, Dinson only went up to 80 metres before abandoning the project. At Rusununguko essential services such as schools and health facilities are not available. People walk a distance of about 8- 10 kilometres to their former village in Nyikavanhu to access these services. CRD observed that there was no bridge linking Rusununguko and Nyikavanhu villages and when Munyati River fills up during the rainy season, it becomes hazardous for relocated families to cross the river and access these essential services. At Sable Flats farm where 22 farmers are earmarked for relocation, there is no clinic, schools and dip tank nearby. If Dinson does not build these essential services relocated communities would have to walk distances of up to 12 kilometres to access them.

Lack of socio psycho support

Accelerated mining developments by Dinson have seen graves of loved ones being destroyed and others exhumed and reburied. Vegetable gardens, fruits orchard trees have been uprooted and farming land families nurtured for decades overrun by bulldozers. The pain of losing these valuables has deeply affected victims of mining displacement at Inhoek, Singleton and Rusununguko communities. Women have been hurt the most. Some have succumbed to the pain. The overarching standard is that displacement "shall not be carried out in a manner that violates the rights to life, dignity, liberty and security of those affected", UN (Guiding

Principle 8). Disruption of family cohesion violates Articles 17 and 23 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which recognizes the family as a natural and fundamental group with the right to state protection against arbitrary interference. The separation of adult children from their parents to distant relocation destinations such as Rusununguko has triggered cultural shock, isolation and depression. From the interviews conducted by CRD, relocated families indicated that there were no follow up visits by relevant government authorities to assess the well being of newly resettled communities. Such follow ups are essential to ensure that families access psychosocial support and other income generating activities that will enhance the social integration of victims into their new communities.

Disregarding of cultural practices

Members of the nucleus family in the Shona culture have separate housing units at a family homestead as obtaining in Manhize communities. Bedrooms are divided according to gender and marital status. Children of 22 plot holders affected by relocation have started their own families and have also constructed houses at the plots allocated for their parents. The situation also applies to existing polygamous families in the affected village. The plot holders also have their grandchildren living with them. A lot of them are of school going age and some are orphans. Information gathered by CRD indicates that each plot holder earmarked for relocation has between 5 to 10 below 18 years (minimum total for affected plot holders 111) and 3 to 15 dependents above 18 years (minimum total 97 for affected plot holders). The total number of married plot holder's children living on the plots is 81. Another 32 are living illegally in the Magada areas where the government is forcing them to return to the plots allocated for their parents which are already overcrowded. A total of 51 sub housing units accommodating members of the nucleus families were not considered for compensation. Only one 4 bedroomed one size fits all main house was built for each nucleus family at the relocation site. The houses will not accommodate the overgrown nucleus families that have developed from 40 years of settling at Inhoek farm. The plot by government and Dinson to squash plot holders and their families into small houses at Sable Flats violates section 28 of the constitution on the rights of every person to adequate shelter, section 51 on the right to human dignity and section 53 on the right to culture. The decision will be a violation of the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement which oblige the state to ensure that communities have the right to resettlement with housing that must satisfy adequacy, accessibility, habitability, security of tenure and cultural adequacy among other issues.

Inhabitants seek remediation with the Minister of lands

22 farmers earmarked for relocation from Inhoek farm to Sable farm in Manhize submitted a letter to the Ministry of Lands last week seeking an audience with the Minister over relocation grievances. The farmers are seeking a review of the comprehension package that they were railroaded to consent to by Ministry of Lands officials. Grievances highlighted in the letter include the use of intimidation to frighten them to consent to the compensation agreement, denied opportunity by the Ministry Officials to consult and make informed consent to the compensation agreement, Arbitrary and exclusionary criteria used for compensation that left out some of their valuable assets, Unsustainable compensation figures for land preparation in relocation destination. The farmers are also questioning the level of unpreparedness in relocation destinations where new houses have already developed cracks. They were also imploring Dinson to direct 10% of shares towards livelihood projects for communities affected by relocations in Manhize. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development confirmed receipt of the letter.

Take Aways from Manhize relocation injustices.

- **Lack of meaningful engagement between miner, government and affected community on relocation.** There has not been any documentary disclosure concerning relocation planning made by Dinson and relevant government authorities to affected communities. For 2 years Dinson operated in Manhize without a mining licence. Commencement of mining operations without legally binding agreements that are raised from transparent and wider stakeholder consultative processes has been one of the major causes of adverse human rights impacts of mining in Zimbabwe. Without a licence, an EIA consultation engagement with local inhabitants, Dinson mining operations violated section 73 of the constitution, section 4 of EMA Act on access to environmental information and protection and SI 7 of 2007 section 4 on (Environmental Impact Assessment & Ecosystems Protection). Without a comprehensive relocation plan, Dinson conspired with government authorities to uproot families and forced them to relocate separately to new areas without compensation. At Inhoek farm Dinson arbitrarily seized farming land resulting in loss of livelihoods for local inhabitants.
- **Failure by government to balance business and human rights in Dinson mining investments.** As a duty bearer government is

expected to protect local inhabitants from arbitrary land dispossession until the miner has secured alternative land for relocating affected families. Government was also expected to ensure that Dinson promptly compensated farmers meaningful amounts for loss of production until they had been relocated. Government was also expected to ensure that Dinson adequately prepared new land for farming. Government authorities had an obligation to monitor and inspect the construction of houses for victims of relocations at every stage to ensure Dinson was compliant with housing regulations and safety standards. Government was also expected to ensure livelihoods and services are made available in relocation destination areas before families are relocated in line with Chapter 4 of the constitution on declaration of rights and UN guiding principles on displacement. By facilitating relocations of local inhabitants without due diligence processes, government has abdicated its responsibility to protect human rights in Dinson Iron and Steel mining developments in Manhize.

- **Weaponisation of weak land tenure system to advantage miner over farmer.** The land permits tenure system does not provide security of tenure on agricultural land. The conditions of living on this land outlined in their permits rest solely at the discretion of the Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. Thus the Minister “may for any public reverse this permit at any time and under such conditions as he thinks fit on payment of the HOLDER of such compensation the Minister may decide. In the case of 22 farmers earmarked for relocation, the Minister used discretionary powers to deny farmers the opportunity to negotiate mutually beneficial compensation packages. The permit land tenure system is archaic and violates section 71 of the constitution on property rights and section 73 on environmental rights. It violates UN guiding principles on business and human rights and the rights of communities to free prior and informed consent on relocations.
- **Lack of political will to enable local people to appropriately share in the benefits of such mining projects:** Dinson started pig iron production in June 2024. It is projected to produce 60,000 tonnes annually which will rise to 3.2 million in the third phase and 5 million tonnes annually in the final phase. The project is expected to cut the import of steel products and increase foreign income through exports. With iron ore reserves lasting over 200 years, it is taunted to be one of the biggest iron and steel plants in Africa.

However, Zimbabweans are failing to benefit from such a rich mineral base because of widespread corruption, poor governance practices and archaic legislation. There is lack of political will to introduce progressive legislation that ensures local communities derive meaningful benefits from mining because political elites are exploiting current policy weaknesses for selfish gains.