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CRD Warns Government Over Failure to Protect Mushenjere Villagers from Dinson's Forced Relocations in Manhize

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The Centre for Research and Development (CRD) warns the Government of Zimbabwe that its failure to protect communities affected by the Dinson Iron and Steel Company (DISCO) project in Manhize is resulting in grave and avoidable human rights violations. In the past week, Dinson has intensified efforts to forcibly relocate the remaining 18 families in Mushenjere village to Sable farm, even as heavy rains begin and the relocation site remains unprepared. The forced removals are taking place without water, farmland, or social services, exposing villagers to hunger and extreme vulnerability.

CRD notes with concern that the relocation MOUs signed in November 2024, which villagers say were signed under duress, did not spell out Dinson's obligations to prepare Sable farm. The agreements did not clarify whether government or Dinson was responsible for providing essential services. This lack of clarity has allowed both parties to evade accountability, leaving families caught between neglect and coercion.

CRD therefore warns the Government, as the guarantor and protector of citizens, that it is in breach of its constitutional and international duties by standing by while forced relocations proceed. Sections 44, 51, 71, 73, and 81 of the Constitution oblige the state to protect the rights, dignity, and property of its citizens. The Government's failure to intervene also violates the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which require states to prevent corporate abuses and protect communities, particularly indigenous and rural populations, from exploitation by business enterprises. CRD warns that by allowing Dinson's actions, government was enabling repeated violations seen in earlier relocations at Singleton and Rusununguko. [read more](#)

A recent field visit conducted by CRD to both Mushenjere Village and Sable Farm to assess the current situation of the families affected by the Dinson Iron and Steel mining reveals distressing experiences. The relocation area has no school or Early Childhood Development (ECD) structure. Children currently walk about three kilometres to Kwaedza Primary School, while ECD pupils have stopped going to school. There is also no dip tank for community livestock, no electricity for new

houses, and no clinic for relocated families. According to families interviewed, Dinson has also stopped paying food allowances, leaving both relocated and waiting families hungry. The community is also grieving the loss of graveyards of their loved ones, which are now enclosed within Dinson's durawall. Families claimed that they are no longer allowed to access these graves for cultural rituals, causing deep emotional and cultural distress. Some fear that relocation will separate them permanently from the graves of their loved ones, which may be vandalised or neglected.

In Mushenjere Village, CRD observed deep fear and anger among inhabitants over divide-and-rule tactics employed by Dinson. They accused Dinson of working behind Village Head Eria Jemwa to pressure families to move despite the obvious lack of readiness at the relocation site. Families reported that Jemwa recently came to the village, accompanied by two lorries to ferry villagers to the relocation site. Villagers resisted the move, further creating tension and mistrust in the community. At the same time, living conditions in Mushenjere have deteriorated. Families remain stranded on land already taken over by mining developments, and roads continue to cut through their village. Livelihoods have collapsed. Recent heavy rains have worsened the situation. Several huts have collapsed or been badly damaged by storms. Many families have not been maintaining these traditional huts, knowing they were due for relocation. This has left dozens of households living in unsafe, leaking shelters as the rain intensifies. Scores of women interviewed by CRD indicated that they are now caught in a double tragedy, where their original village is no longer habitable, yet the relocation site at Sable Farm remains unprepared for settlement.

"They keep telling us to go and look after our houses before thieves steal our things. But is that our responsibility? Why can't Dinson meet us all? Why are they hiding behind Jemwa? Maybe they bought him that car to use him against us," said one woman.

Others spoke about the heartbreak of leaving behind ancestral graves.

"Our graves are now inside the durawall. We are ordered to go without them, and no one says what will happen. Where we are going, there is no grazing land for our cattle, just a desert."

A woman with a disability added:

"I am being forced to go, but how will I live there? I have no money, no food, no help. What will I do?"

"Our old homes are falling, our new homes are leaking, and our land is gone," she summed up.

At Sable Farm, where four families have already been moved, conditions are equally dire. The relocated families expressed deep frustration and despair, saying they have been "dumped and forgotten."

Narrating his ordeal, 86-year-old Tapfumaneyi Mugoni pointed out that the living conditions at Mushenjere forced him to relocate. Heavy mining activities had covered the village in dust and toxic fumes, and graders had destroyed the fields he had cultivated for decades.

"I left because the air was no longer fit to breathe, and graders tore up my farming land. But here, there is nothing good. The water is contaminated because the borehole was drilled below the toilets. I can't walk two kilometres to fetch water from Dinson's tap. I'm 86 years old. There is no dam, no irrigation, no centre pivot, and the rains have already come. People elsewhere are planting, but we have nowhere to plant."

He added that Dinson still owes each family three months of food allowances, worth about US \$200 per month, and many have gone into debt to survive. "Even if they pay us now, the money will only clear what we owe to others. There is no school here; our grandchildren need ECD and are no longer going to school. The clinic at Mhou is about 14 kilometres away, and at my age I cannot walk that distance."

CRD observed that some of the houses at the relocation site were uncompleted and abandoned. Some of the completed ones had already developed cracks on the walls and floors. Mr Mugoni pointed out that roofs were leaking rainwater into the houses. He said he complained to Dinson, who sent some Chinese to assess, but they never came back to carry out repairs. Commenting on the new houses, Mr Gwere, another elderly relocated villager, had this to say:

"From a distance, the houses look beautiful, but inside they are raining. The windows don't close; water comes in. The doors are falling off; we've tied them with wire. There are no keys, no padlocks. They only build standard houses for themselves, not for us."

In December 2024, CRD reported that government inspectors had condemned six houses constructed by the Chinese at Singleton over similar concerns. The inspectors ordered Dinson to rebuild standard houses for the affected families. CRD recently followed up with families at Singleton and found that construction had been derailed by disagreements between the Chinese and government inspectors over the type of foundation to be built. Inspectors insisted on monitoring the work at every stage. Families also told CRD that they were entering another rainy season in substandard, leaking houses, and Dinson had not provided makeshift tents.

From experiences gained through CRD community exchange visits to other relocated communities such as Murambinda, Buhera, and Arda Transau, affected families made efforts to monitor the construction of their houses at Sable Farm. They often clashed with the Chinese, who did not want them near the construction site. The families alerted government officials about the poor workmanship, but no inspectors were sent.

CRD observed that water scarcity is another major concern at the relocation site. The settlement has only two boreholes, and just one is working, already drying up

and providing barely enough water for part of the day. The limited supply cannot sustain the community, forcing women and children to walk long distances to Dinson's mine area to fetch water. According to Mr Gwere: "We were promised piped water to each home, but the Chinese never delivered."

He said the nearest clinic is 14 kilometres away, and the Dinson clinic is private and inaccessible to relocated villagers. The promised dam and centre-pivot irrigation system have not been built, leaving farmers without any means to grow crops this season. Despite repeated government promises, no land preparation has been done, and families have not been shown where they will farm once they are settled. Some villagers claimed that they were told they would be allocated 0.6 hectares for cultivation, and some hectares of land will be allocated under irrigation. The 0.6 hectares is much smaller than the six hectares they previously farmed at Mushenjere. This reduction destroys their ability to sustain livelihoods through agriculture. Mr Gwere reminded CRD that when the families were first resettled in 1984 under the Minda Mirefu resettlement programme, each household was issued with land permits by the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development, clearly spelling out the size of land allocated for housing, cultivation, and grazing.

"When we were resettled in 1984, we were given permits showing how much land we had for farming, grazing, and homesteads," Mr Gwere said. "Now, after 41 years, we have been moved again, but we have no papers. We don't even know the boundaries of our new land or whether these houses truly belong to us."

The absence of these permits at Sable Farm has left the relocated families exposed to manipulation and uncertainty. CRD warns that this reflects the insecurity of tenure faced by other mining-affected communities across the country. In Marange diamond relocations, each household with an average of 5 hectares on communal land was railroaded to accept a one-hectare allocation for each family at Arda Transau. The land covered a homestead, cattle pen, and cultivation, plus an additional 0.5-hectare plot for each family under irrigation. However, the irrigation scheme did not materialise as planned. Only one centre pivot initially meant for the Anjin relocated community was secured to increase agricultural production for about 2,100 families from five relocated communities. Meanwhile, the mechanised irrigation system did not yield the desired outcome because of high production costs. Most of the proceeds were deducted for inputs, maintenance, and loan repayment for the centre-pivot system, leaving families with little, if any, income. Today, only about 30 families remain active on the scheme, while thousands have abandoned it altogether.

The promise of irrigated farming, therefore, failed to restore food security for the estimated 10,000 people relocated to Arda Transau. During the fact-finding visit to Arda Transau by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines in 2017, CRD asked the then Permanent Secretary of Mines about the sustainability of allocating one hectare for each relocated family. In his response, Mr Gudyanga claimed that the decision was noble because the soils at Arda Transau were richer and more

productive than the soil in Marange. His statement contradicted the Acting District Administrator, Mr Sigauke, who said the small allocations were meant to accommodate the 4,300 people from 43 villages earmarked for relocation. The same trend is now visible in Manhize. More than 800 families who were allocated land 41 years ago under the Minda Mirefu programme are bound to lose adequate land for farming to Dinson Iron and Steel project and related mining developments. Already, 34 families from Mushenjere and Kwaedza villages have been notified of pending relocations. Authorities are allocating smaller plots because they anticipate that many people will be affected in the future. This approach is flawed, as it threatens food security and undermines the ability of families to sustain their livelihoods, especially in the absence of a fully funded and mechanised agricultural support system. As a result, the land tenure system has effectively become a tool of exclusion, pushing traditional farming communities to the margins of large-scale mining investments in Zimbabwe.

Repeating a National Tragedy

Zimbabwe's failure to learn from past experiences on relocation points to a deeper governance crisis, one where foreign mining investments are prioritised over citizens' constitutional rights. Dinson began pig iron production in 2024, exporting thousands of tonnes annually, yet none of the affected communities have benefited from dividends or community development funds.

CRD's Position

CRD condemns Dinson's coercive relocation practices and the complicity of government ministries that have failed to protect affected communities. These actions violate:

- Section 71 of the Constitution (protection from arbitrary deprivation of property),
- Section 51 (right to dignity),
- Section 28 (right to adequate shelter), and
- Section 73 (environmental rights).

They also breach international norms on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

CRD Calls for Immediate Government Action

CRD urgently calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to:

1. Suspend all forced relocations at Mushenjere until Sable farm is fully serviced with water, housing, farmland, and social amenities.
2. Deploy inspectors from the Ministry of Housing to assess the structural safety of houses already built.
3. Provide immediate food, water, and health support to affected families.
4. Review the compensation framework to ensure equitable and sustainable livelihood restoration.
5. Investigate acts of intimidation and coercion by Dinson agents and government officials.
6. Establish a Relocation Oversight Taskforce, including affected community committees, local leadership, and Parliament, to monitor future mining-related relocations.

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