

## **HUMAN RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Prepared by Mutuso Dhliwayo, Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association

### **Chivi case study**

Chivi is a rural district situated in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. There are three chiefs in the district namely Chivi, Gororo and Nemauzhe. It falls within natural farming region IV, a semi extensive farming region. The population is estimated to be about one million consisting of ethnic Karanga people. Farming is a major source of livelihood while livestock production provides an additional source of livelihood. The soils in Chivi district are mainly sandy. Sandy soils are characterized by low water retention and therefore need a lot of water for crops to grow well

### **HOW CLIMATE CHANGE IS AFFECTING CHIVI PEOPLE**

Due to its location in region IV, which traditionally receives very little rainfall, Chivi district is one of the districts that have been greatly affected by climate change. As a result of climate change, the Chivi people can no longer rely on farming as a source of livelihood as they used to do. Farming is increasingly becoming a very unreliable source of livelihood and means to adapt to climate change are being explored. Climate change in Chivi District is evidenced by droughts and floods. In the past the first rains known locally as the gukurahundi or bumharutsva used to be received in late September or early October. Nowadays however, the Chivi community receive rainfall, that is if they receive rainfall at all, around December.

The climate change experienced in Chivi District has a number of human rights implications. These are as follows:

#### **Food security**

As a result of droughts, people can no longer produce enough food to feed their families and these impacts on local food security. Droughts have also resulted in scarcity of water. The Tugwi and Runde rivers are the main source of water for Chivi people and their animals. As a result of the droughts, these two rivers are almost dry affecting humans and animals. Boreholes and wells that are 42 metres deep are now dry and this forces people to travel 25 to a nearby dam to get water. There are also increased incidences of diseases like cholera as a result of people drinking unclean water.

#### **Education**

Apart from providing food, food production is also a source of income that enables children to go to school in rural areas like Chivi. However, as a result of climate change, some people in Chivi can no longer afford to send their children to school thereby affecting their right to education. "I used to rely on farming to send my seven children to school, but now I cannot afford to send them anymore"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with headman Madyangove on 28 September 2007

### **Increase in Human Wild life Conflicts**

The droughts resulting from climate change have led to increase in human –wildlife conflicts. With the shortage of grass, animals are competing for fruits like matamba and chakata and some animals have also now resorted to staying near highways so that they can eat things falling from trucks like maize and sugar cane. These animals cause a great danger at night, some of the animals are overrun by trucks and many people have lost their livestock.



*A goat along the Harare Beitbrigde road which passes through Chivi district in Masvingo province*

### **Loss of biodiversity**

Frequent droughts have also affected biodiversity in Chivi District. Animals like hypopotamus and snakes like pythons are no longer common. They have either died and in some cases they have migrated (i.e., hippos) to areas where they can find water as the Tugwi and Runde rivers are drying up. People in Chivi district used to hunt animals to supplement their diet, but this is no longer the case as there is nothing to hunt. Trees like baobab which are known to be drought resistant are also being affected. Its only trees that are of no use to people that are thriving. As one grandmother observed “ things have changed my grandson, we used to have a variety of trees in this area but now, we have discovered that it is only thorn trees that can survive in this region and such trees are of no use to us anyway. Chivi is increasingly developing into a no tree zone except the small thorn trees as you can see”<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>2</sup> Personal communication with Onesai Gwasi on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2007

While there have been frequent droughts, there have also been incidences of heavy rains, causing floods, cyclones and high winds which destroys property, houses, roof tops and infrastructure like roads and bridges. One such incident is cyclone eline which caused untold suffering in the district leading to some to conclude that maybe their ancestors are angry with them. “Young man, I am disturbed by this. Maybe our ancestors are not happy. That house you see with no roof, it was destroyed by heavy winds which just came from nowhere and I can not afford to get asbestos to repair it. I had to remove the window frames for safe keeping after the pans were destroyed”.<sup>3</sup>



### **Chivi people’s efforts to adapt to climate change**

The Chivi people are trying to adapt to climate change. However, some of the adaptations are leading to environmental degradation and may be contributing to the drying of the Tugwi and Runde river due to siltation. Maize is the staple food in Zimbabwe and this is what the Chivi people have been growing all along. However as a result of the problems caused by climate change, they are now growing drought resistant crops like rapoko and sorghum.

Gold panning is one of the alternatives that people in the district have resorted to as a source of livelihood. “ Over the past 10 years we have actually resorted to gold panning for survival since our farms are not helping us anymore” However, gold panning is illegal and it is attributed with causing erosion, land degradation and siltation of rivers which may explain why some of the rivers are drying up.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with chief Gororo on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2007



A Non Governmental Organisation called CARE Zimbabwe and Chivi Rural District Council has been helping the Chivi people to adapt to the realities of climate change by training them on new farming techniques. CARE Zimbabwe also assisted them in rebuilding a dam that was destroyed during one of the cyclones that hit the district. This dam has helped the community with water for them to pursue other sources of livelihoods like gardening and orchards. Though limited, these alternative sources of livelihoods are helping the Chive people to mitigate some of the challenges resulting from climate change.

### **References**

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