

Business


**RETHINKING COAL EXTRACTION & USE
IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**
STOP NEW FOSSIL FUEL PROJECTS

Increased incidences of droughts, shifting seasons, floods, more hot days and heat waves have made the impacts of climate change and variability more evident. The impacts of climate change in Zimbabwe are likely to stall the country's development, pose a serious risk to food security and adaptive capacity.

At international level, Zimbabwe has committed to negotiations on climate change having been among the first countries to sign and ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and also acceded to the Kyoto Protocol in 2009. Through acceding to various instruments, Zimbabwe has also continued to support the United Nations efforts to curb the escalation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Taking heed of the glaring impacts of climate change, the government of Zimbabwe developed a National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCSR) in 2014 to guide national response measures in addressing the impacts of climate change. However, translation of this response strategy into action remains a dream yet to be realised. Zimbabwe is famous for producing super blueprints but drastically fails implementation. One of the guiding principles of the NCCSR is "Mainstreaming climate change into policy and legal framework as well as development planning." It has however been appalling to note that the policy directions assumed this far are in contradiction with this guiding principle. Zimbabwe has planned the building of 15 new coal plants (of which 6 are still in the pre-permit stage) while the country is already grappling with the effects of climate change on a society dominated by agriculture.

The country's vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change makes adaptation a national priority, demanding policy direction at the highest level and the integration of climate change issues into national development planning processes at national, provincial, district and local levels. Regrettably, the impacts of climate change are evidently felt at local level and most felt by poor communities due to their low adaptive capacity.

The energy sector stands at the centre of the climate change discourse in Zimbabwe, because it is the major contributor of GHG emissions. It contributes the biggest share (60.7 per cent) of the country's total GHG emissions, followed by agriculture 20.7 per cent, industrial processes 16.6 per cent and waste 1.9 per cent. Greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector emanate from combustion of carbon-based fuels as well as fugitive emissions during coal mining and handling processes. It is therefore clear that any serious and meaningful climate change response strategy must embrace the reduction of GHG emissions. Government must stop funding and expanding fossil fuel powered projects. Recently, Zimbabwe commissioned a power station extension project in Hwange. The coal fuelled power station extension project funded by China to the tune of 1.5 billion was celebrated for the possibility of creating up to 7000 jobs directly and indirectly and for feeding an additional 600MW into the national grid. However, the social, economic and environmental cost of increased coal extraction and use far outweigh the purported benefits.

Over the years coal mining in Hwange District has posed serious negative impacts on the physical, biological, and social aspects of the environment which have not been adequately addressed because of the purported economic

Agriculture remains key sector in the economy

BEFORE the Bantu migration from East and Central Africa, the denizens of this part of the world were nomadic hunter-gatherers. According to *Wikipedia*, "the San or Saan peoples are members of various Khoesan-speaking indigenous hunter-gatherer groups representing the first nation of southern Africa, whose territories span Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and South Africa". The San, or Bushmen, were gradually pushed out of present-day Zimbabwe by the Bantu people.

Remnants of the San can still be found in the drier parts of southern Africa where they eke out a living in the harsh deserts of the south. The Bantu people who supplanted the San were livestock herders and were also engaged in crop production. They were mainly subsistence farmers, growing sufficient food for their needs and upkeep.

The idyllic life of the Bantu people shattered

For centuries the Bantu

the sunday maverick

WITH GLORIA NDORO-MKOMBACHOTO



Agriculture remains a key sector in the economy

Agriculture has remained the mainstay of our economy since pre-colonial times. In fact, before colonialism, agriculture was the main economic activity. As Zimbabwe modernised and industrialised, agriculture became a key component of this modernisation and industrialisation process.

Agriculture provides food for the population, raw materials for industry, employment for the people and is a source of foreign currency on account of exports. Prior to the fast-track land redistribution exercise of 2001, agriculture accounted for 41% of exports and it constituted about 18% of the country's GDP. A third of the population was engaged in agricultural activities in the 1990s.

This was to change when

hem, chaos or bloodletting. It could have been done with some measure of decorum, empathy and dignity. The new leadership, who has the benefit of hindsight, has I hope, learnt lessons from what happened here.

As a consequence of the chaotic nature of the land redistribution exercise, production plummeted, hundreds of thousands of farmhands lost their jobs, and food shortages became the order of the day. As the agricultural sector collapsed, economic havoc was unleashed upon the land. Zimbabweans emigrated in droves as they sought succor and sustenance in foreign lands. Hordes of hungry citizens swarmed border towns of our neighbours in desperate search for food and other necessities of life. The breadbasket had become a basket case.

Today, you will see that most of the farmland is lying fallow and this has been going on for years. "Amasimu kawalinywanga" "Minda yarara" "The fields are lying fallow" for too long. This situation cannot be allowed to continue like this indefinitely. We need to utilise this land for the benefit of the country. Some of the characters who were allocated farms were mere speculators who took up the land, not because of love for agriculture, but just because it was being given for free.

Use it or loose it

I think there is merit in adopting a landholding policy which says "use it or lose it". Also charging a modest land rental could be helpful in weeding out time-wasters who will voluntarily give up the land because of cost considerations. But I guess it is a forlorn hope to expect bureaucrats and policymakers to do anything about the under-utilisation of the land because they are conflicted. They are the ones guilty of under-utilising the land. It's like expecting criminals to apprehend

