

Saturday, Chirundu (09<sup>th</sup> June, 2024)



### **CHIRUNDU'S MUSAYA MEN COMPLAIN ABOUT CONJUGAL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DUE TO WATER CRISIS**

Some men of Musaya Ward in Chirundu District, Southern Province, say their conjugal rights are being violated because spouses are sleeping at a well due to erratic water supply following severe drought.

Albert Chasala has since paid tribute to the World Wide Fund for Nature - WWF and Centre for Environment Justice - CEJ for plans to rehabilitate the Zemba Zemba Dam.

"When we had water, our children would go to school, our spouses stayed home to make gardens. We ask the Government to think about our situation because we no longer bathe and our body colour is dark now because of the erratic water supply. Our children have stopped school just to look for water. Our wives leave us men sleeping because they spend nights at the only water point. We are now denied conjugal rights because our women sleep at the well. Livestock production has gone down because of dying due to lack of water," he said.

One of the women, Josephine Mafuta, said conflict in relationships has escalated as men prey on women accusing them of promiscuity for sleeping at the well while others go for girlfriends.

She said women and children are struggling with erratic water supply instead of doing productive activities.

"You have seen the fire as evidence that we sleep there from 01:00 hours up to 06:00 hours. We now have shifts with others coming from 06:00 hours up to midnight. We have no peace in homes during this period of erratic water supply. Our men accuse us that we cannot draw water the whole night, there are other things they do such as prostitution. We are innocent because we just sleep there to draw water for the family to survive. Men come to spy on us thinking we are doing fornication only to find us in groups drawing water. Once our men are sure that we are at the water point, some sneak to enjoy conjugal rights at their girlfriends' place. Hunger has also hit us because stakeholders preach about gender inclusiveness, but women spend nights drawing water. We are grateful to CEJ and WWF for their plans to

rehabilitate Zemba Zemba Dam so that by November if God gives us rainfall, we can have water," she said.

Ms Mafuta said that once there is water, residents can stop charcoal production to focus on gardening to improve lives and fight against Climate Change.

Meanwhile, Centre for Environment Justice- CEJ Executive Director Maggie Mwape said her organization working with WWF has mobilized 60% of the funds for the rehabilitation of the Zemba Zemba Dam project while 40% will have to be from Chirundu Town Council.

"Water is important for domestic and animals. The situation for the Musaya Community in Chirundu District is sad. As CEJ, we appreciate, the WWF that we have been working with for over a decade now. WWF has been committed to supporting community work and environmental and climate change work. In Chirundu, CEJ is working with WWF through a project. We are at a point where we are trying our best to rehabilitate Zemba Zemba Dam in Musaya Community," she said.

Ms Mwape said CEJ was in Chirundu recently with Engineers from the Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA) for a feasibility study before designing how the dam will look, hoping to complete works by November this year.

"This is a huge investment. We have 60% of the funding and we are hoping that 40% of the funding will come from the CDF allocation from the Chirundu Town Council. When we are done with the feasibility study and the design, these will be sitting at the Council and looking at what WARMA will prepare, then we can commence the work. We will fence the dam to ensure safety against children accessing it. We will create a pathway for Communities to draw water for domestic use. We are hoping that by November before the onset of the rain, we can complete the work. The current water scarcity is not good because it will affect the performance of Children in schools and breed conflict in relationships as people are sleeping at the only water point looking for water. Unfortunately, Musaya is not the only community struggling with erratic water supply because we experienced severe drought this year leading to the Head of State to declare a National Disaster as a result of drought," she said.

The CEJ Executive Director urged various stakeholders, both local and international, to join efforts in identifying similar challenges and help the vulnerable communities because Zambia's drought situation is severe.

Disability Inclusion in Climate Action - DICA Project Coordinator, Engineer Gabriel Mukuka, said the erratic water supply has affected people with disabilities severely.

Issued By: CEJ Communications Unit

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Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ)

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Plot 269, Off Twin Palm Road, Ibex Hill, Lusaka -Zambia

Visit CEJ website: <https://cejzambia.org/> and Facebook: <https://facebook.com/cejzambia.org>

Call: +260 954 713003 / +260 964 244255 / +260 973 389859

Email: [info@cejzambia.org](mailto:info@cejzambia.org)