

Monday, Sinazongwe (26th May 2025)



FIND ALTERNATIVE LAND BEFORE DISPLACING PEOPLE - OVP

The Office of the Vice President (OVP) has emphasised that investors must find alternative land before displacing people in line with government policy.

OVP Southern Provincial Office Resettlement Development Officer Mubanga Mulenga stated that individuals facing displacement must involve the OVP to ensure their interests are protected.

Mr. Mulenga said this in Sinazongwe District Southern Province during a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue organised by the Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) under the Resilience Initiatives for Sustainable Environment (RISE) Project supported by Bread for the World (Germany).

He explained that new resettlement areas should include essential services such as schools, health facilities, markets, roads, and water infrastructure, ensuring displaced individuals are left in a better position than before.

Providing an overview of the department's mandate, Mr Mulenga said the resettlement programme aims to coordinate and implement both voluntary and involuntary relocations, including those caused by development projects, mining, and disasters.

He noted that voluntary resettlement applies to individuals who willingly seek support from the department, while involuntary resettlement occurs due to external factors such as natural disasters or mining operations.

Mr Mulenga highlighted that the department prioritises vulnerable groups, acknowledging the difficulty many individuals face in acquiring land.

He said efforts are made to ensure land allocation includes infrastructure development and support services from traditional leaders, government institutions, and the forestry department.

Mr Mulenga noted that resettlement is not just about relocating people but about ensuring they have access to essential services and economic empowerment opportunities.

He explained that when land is allocated, beneficiaries are not abandoned but are provided with training on agriculture and livelihood development to help them sustain themselves.

Mr Mulenga added that the resettlement process also involves addressing vulnerabilities and safeguarding the rights of affected populations.

He stressed the importance of collaboration between stakeholders, including the private sector, communities, and government agencies, to ensure responsible and sustainable resettlement.

He reiterated that displaced individuals must receive adequate compensation.

He called on investors to adhere to these policies, ensuring displaced communities are left better off than before.

Mr Mulenga concluded by reaffirming the OVP's commitment to responsible resettlement, urging community participation in decision-making processes, and ensuring displaced people are treated with dignity.

Earlier, Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) Executive Director Maggie Mapalo Mwape said the Resilience Initiatives for Sustainable Environment (RISE) Project, empowers mining-affected communities in Sinazongwe and Serenje districts.

She said the RISE Project, launched in 2019, is set to conclude in December 2025 but will be extended for a third phase from January 2026 to December 2028, following approval from its funding partner.

Ms Mwape highlighted significant progress made over the years, including the establishment of 21 saving groups in Sinazongwe with over 300 members.

She noted that despite the achievements, challenges such as economic instability, environmental degradation, and displacement continue to affect communities.

The CEJ Executive Director said the dialogue was an opportunity to celebrate successes, confront existing obstacles, and develop solutions for the next phase of the project.

She outlined four key focus areas for the third phase: food systems innovation, environmental protection, community economic livelihoods, and social equity and justice.

Ms Mwape announced plans to visit saving groups in Mamba and Sinazongwe to help establish cooperatives, aligning with the current phase of the project.

She said CEJ intends to provide seed loans of up to K50,000 to cooperatives, ensuring they operate with a formal legal structure and receive capacity-building support to access funding through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF).

Ms Mwape further revealed plans for an award ceremony in the second week of June, during which cooperatives and saving groups will be recognised and granted resources.

She said the event would also mark the handover of a tree nursery and shade structure at Makonkoto Primary School in Sinazongwe, developed in collaboration with the Forestry Department to support environmental conservation efforts.

She extended her gratitude to the European Union, Bread for the World, and the CEJ team for their dedication to making the dialogue possible.

Meanwhile, Chieftainess Sinazongwe emphasised that traditional leadership holds a sacred duty to protect communities, ensuring their well-being despite challenges posed by mining activities.

She said the people of Sinazongwe have endured environmental degradation, water contamination, and displacement due to mining operations, yet their spirit remains unbroken.

The Traditional Leader praised the Resilience Initiatives for Sustainable Environment (RISE) Project for its commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that women, who she described as the backbone of communities, and people with disabilities, who offer unique perspectives, remain central to development efforts.

And Sinazongwe District Commissioner Nchimunya Siakole has reaffirmed the government's commitment to fostering sustainable development and environmental resilience in the district.

In a speech read on his behalf by Sinazongwe District Administrative Officer, Brian Siwelwa, Mr Siakole underscored the importance of collective action in addressing challenges posed by mining activities and environmental degradation.

He noted that Sinazongwe is a district rich in natural resources and resilient communities, yet it continues to grapple with issues such as water contamination, economic instability, and displacement—particularly affecting vulnerable groups including women, youth, and people with disabilities.

The DC further recognised the presence of representatives from the Office of the Vice President's resettlement department, noting the importance of aligning local efforts with national policies to create lasting solutions for affected communities.

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