



# TITLE OF RESEARCH PAPER: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE ARDA TRANSAU COMMUNITY DISPLACED BY MINING IN ZIMBABWE

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## KeyWords

Cultural Erosion, Displacement, Lived Experiences, Mining-Induced Relocation, Political Disempowerment, Socio-economic Impacts, Zimbabwe

## ABSTRACT

Mining Induced Relocation (MIR) is a growing reality in Africa as mineral extraction expands, often displacing communities and greatly changing their lives. While the general challenges of MIR are known, a detailed understanding of the long-term, real-life experiences of those relocated for mining is vital. Grounded in an interpretivist approach, this paper examines the Arda Transau community's post-2009 relocation experiences in Zimbabwe, where they were forcibly moved from Chiadzwa and Marange to pave way for diamond extraction. The study explored both positive and negative aspects, detailing social, economic, cultural, and political experiences. Using a qualitative method, data from thirteen interviews and two focus group discussions were thematically analysed. Though some families gained new houses, findings show these benefits were overshadowed by negative impacts. Key problems included broken social ties, severe poverty from inadequate compensation, widespread powerlessness due to limited involvement, and cultural identity loss. These impacts disproportionately affected vulnerable groups including women, young people, people with disabilities, and the elderly. The study concludes that each relocation is unique. Fully assessing specific needs before moving a community is vital for effective support plans that reduce negative outcomes. Recommendations focus on establishing practical livelihood restoration programmes to overcome economic hardship; creating avenues for genuine community participation to counter powerlessness; developing cultural heritage initiatives to preserve identity and social ties; and designing specific support for vulnerable groups. These steps protect relocated people's rights and well-being, offering practical ideas for improved, human-centred MIR policies for MIR communities like Arda Transau.

## Introduction

The global demand for minerals has led to an unprecedented expansion of mining activities, especially in resource-rich developing nations. A significant, yet often overlooked, consequence of this expansion is Mining Induced Relocation (MIR). MIR involves the involuntary relocation of communities to make way for extractive projects. While the economic benefits of mining are highlighted, the human costs associated with such relocations are widespread [1]. These costs extend beyond the immediate act of moving, leading to disruptions in social structures, economic livelihoods, and cultural identity for affected populations globally [2], [3].

In Africa, where mineral wealth is abundant, MIR is a growing reality, impacting rural and often vulnerable communities whose lives are tied to their ancestral lands and traditional economies. Across the continent, cases demonstrate how poorly planned or executed relocations lead to impoverishment, human rights concerns, and a breakdown of existing social capital [4], [5]. Southern Africa, in particular, has witnessed numerous instances of communities relocated for mining, often with limited long-term support, leaving them in precarious positions long after the initial move.

Zimbabwe is no exception to this trend. The country's burgeoning mining sector, especially in diamond and gold extraction, has in-

tensified the pressure on land and the communities residing on it. While policies for relocation exist, their implementation often falls short of international best practices, leading to significant hardship for those relocated. The Chiadzwa and Marange regions, known for their diamond deposits, represent an area where communities have faced successive waves of involuntary relocation since the late 2000s. The Arda Transau community, the focus of this study, was relocated from these areas in 2009.

Many existing studies on MIR within Zimbabwe and globally tend to focus on general impacts or immediate post-relocation challenges [6], [7]. However, there remains a gap in understanding the long-term, daily lived experiences of those relocated, and how these changes affect different, vulnerable, groups within the relocated community over time. Without understanding these real-life stories, the personal struggles, adaptations, and challenges, current approaches to MIR risk missing a key human dimension, leading to policies and practices that are neither effective nor human-centred.

This research paper takes a qualitative look at the Arda Transau community's lived experiences following their relocation. Through in-depth qualitative inquiry, it unpacks the complex social, economic, political/governance, and cultural disruptions, as well as any limited benefits, encountered by the relocated individuals. Understanding these experiences, including those of women, youth, people with disabilities, and the elderly, is vital. By presenting these real challenges and specific resilience strategies, this paper provides clear, empirically grounded information to inform more equitable, participatory, and contextually sensitive MIR policies and practices in Zimbabwe and beyond, ultimately advocating for approaches that prioritize the well-being and dignity of affected communities.

## **The Global Context and Challenges of Mining-Induced Relocation (MIR)**

MIR is a complex and contentious process globally. It forces communities to move, making people more vulnerable. This leads to disruptions in their social and economic lives and affects their cultural fabric [8], [9], [1]. Many studies show that poorly planned relocations result in people losing their ways of making a living, their social connections breaking down, and their cultural identity fading [2], [3]. Without strong protections, communities become poorer and lose their rights, a phenomenon extensively documented across various contexts [10], [5], [6]. While these broader problems are well-documented, the existing information lacks the detailed, personal depth needed to understand how these issues affect people's daily lives and their lived experiences [11], [12].

Research points to many different challenges for relocated communities, but without enough detail about the daily experiences of different groups. For example, studies regularly describe economic difficulties because traditional ways of making a living are disrupted, and unfair payments do not cover all losses, leading to more poverty and ongoing food shortages [10], [8], [12], [7]. However, there are few detailed accounts of the daily struggles people face financially or how these problems affect families over generations [13]. This gap highlights the need for qualitative depth in understanding the multifaceted nature of economic impoverishment.

Similarly, studies acknowledge the impact on cultural identity when community structures are broken, sacred places are lost, and old practices weaken [4], [1], [3]. Psychological effects like trauma and feeling disconnected are also noted. Yet, academic writings have a limited qualitative look at how this cultural loss is truly felt, talked about, and managed by individuals and communities over time, regarding how culture linked to specific landscapes is passed down through generations. In terms of community power, MIR involves a lack of real discussions and involvement, leaving communities feeling left out and unheard [5], [14], [15]. This top-down way of working worsens existing power differences and unfairly affects vulnerable groups. There is limited information on the small, daily ways people experience this loss of voice or influence after relocation.

In Africa, the extractive sector's rapid growth has amplified the challenges of MIR. Many African nations, including Zimbabwe, are rich in mineral resources, attracting foreign investment. However, weak governance, inadequate legal frameworks for relocation, and a lack of transparency characterize these processes, leading to widespread human rights abuses and social disruption [4]. Communities, often rural and agrarian, depend heavily on communal lands and natural resources for their livelihoods and cultural practices. Relocation in this context means not just a loss of land, but an entire way of life, with informal safety nets and traditional governance structures being undermined.

Within Zimbabwe, MIR has a notable history, with the discovery of vast diamond deposits in the Chiadzwa and Marange areas. Reports from these regions highlight challenges similar to those experienced globally but intensified by local socio-economic and political realities [6], [7]. The promise of development and compensation overshadows the long-term disruption to livelihoods, social cohesion, and cultural heritage. Local power dynamics, limited civic space, and challenges in accessing justice mean that affected communities find themselves in risky positions with limited recourse or ability to negotiate fair terms. This context underlines the importance of examining specific local experiences, as they provide nuanced insights into how broader challenges are manifested and felt by communities like Arda Transau.

Understanding the challenges of MIR means looking at it from different angles, as using just one viewpoint limits a full understanding of people's lived realities. The Capabilities Approach [16] helps understanding individual well-being by focusing on what people are actually able to do and be in their lives. However, in MIR, this approach might not fully capture the collective experiences crucial for a community. Similarly, Social Capital Theory [17], [18], [19] explains how social networks and connections help communities act to

gether, but it can overlook how outside pressures from MIR can break down existing community bonds and create new inequalities. This study therefore uses these theories together, like different lenses, to provide a stronger way of looking at the many aspects of lived experiences. This enables a deep understanding of an individual's well-being and social structures within the specific contexts of MIR, without focusing on community resilience.

Despite these insights, there are very few qualitative studies that track how MIR impacts affect lived experiences over a long time beyond the initial relocation. Also, the experiences of different groups like women, young people, and those with disabilities are talked about generally [20], [21], which means there is a need for more detailed research on how MIR uniquely affects them. Importantly, the voices of young people and other marginalised groups are consistently missing from research [22]. This research seeks to bridge this gap by providing a longitudinal perspective from the Arda Transau community.

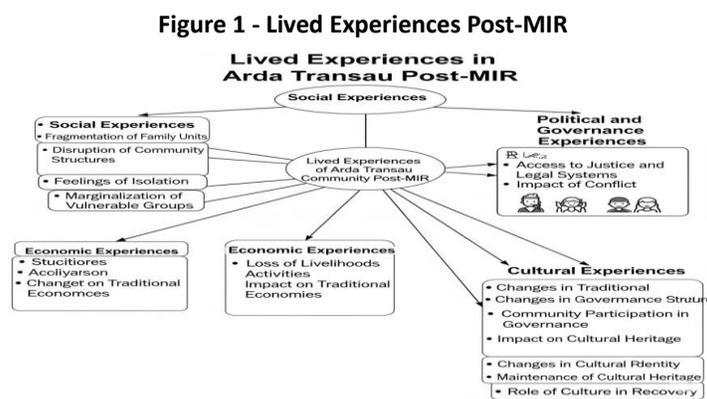
## Methodology

The research paper employed an interpretivist approach and an exploratory case study design to understand the personal lived experiences of the Arda Transau community regarding MIR. This approach was vital for capturing the deeply felt effects of MIR, which quantitative data often cannot show. The Arda Transau community in Manicaland, Zimbabwe, was selected due to its long history with relocation since 2009 [23]. Researchers conducted interviews with 13 household heads and facilitated two focus group discussions (FGDs) with different age groups (18-35 and 36+). Participant recruitment aimed for diverse perspectives, incorporating variables such as gender (60% women and 40% men) and disability status (5% of participants identified as having a disability).

Information was gathered through these in-depth interviews and FGDs, exploring themes such as life before and after relocation, and the challenges faced. All sessions were audio-recorded with permission, and detailed notes were taken. The collected information was then systematically analysed using thematic analysis [24], supported by NVivo software, to identify recurring patterns. Strict ethical guidelines were followed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant privacy and anonymity, minimizing any potential harm, and securing all necessary research permissions from community leaders and local authorities.

## Findings: The Lived Experiences of the Arda Transau Community

This section presents an analysis of the disruptions experienced by the Arda Transau community in Zimbabwe following their MIR. While the relocation sometimes included new houses or improved market access, these limited benefits were overshadowed by negative impacts. Centering the voices of relocated individuals, this analysis reveals the human costs of involuntary relocation, categorized into four interconnected thematic areas namely social, economic, political and governance, and cultural impacts. Figure 4 below provides a thematic structure, illustrating the primary domains of disruption that emerged from the qualitative data, setting the stage for the detailed discussion that follows.



**Source:** Developed by author based on empirical data

### 4.1.1 Social Experiences

The MIR fractured the social fabric of the Arda Transau community, which had been woven over generations in their ancestral lands. Participants spoke of the fragmentation of family units and the loss of deeply ingrained kinship networks. As Peter, \* a male vendor and head of a household, said:

"We used to stay as families, with grandparents, aunts, and uncles all living close together. Relocation scattered our family like seeds in the wind. Now, our children barely know their cousins, and our elders are alone."

Beyond immediate families, established community structures and socio-cultural activities were disrupted. Religious practices, a cornerstone of daily life, also suffered. Blessing, \* a married mechanic and active church member, shared:

"In Marange, we had our own churches. Here in Arda, it is hard to find that same sense of community. It is not just about the building. It is about the people you worshipped with. You feel like an outsider."

These disruptions fuelled widespread feelings of isolation, detachment, and a loss of belonging. Youth, in particular, struggled to forge new social bonds. Tawanda, \* a young male participant, expressed:

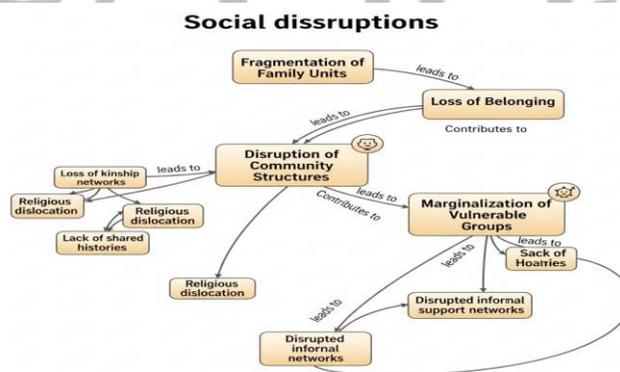
"For us, growing up in Marange meant knowing everyone. Here, it is like starting from zero. It's hard to trust new people after what happened to us."

This sense of alienation was further deepened by Loreen, a female youth, who articulated:

"I feel a deep sense of loss. We have lost not just our homes, but our sense of belonging, our place in the world. It is like a part of who we are, a piece of our very soul, has been left behind, and we cannot get it back. We don't really belong here."

The relocation also increased the marginalization of vulnerable subgroups, including individuals with disabilities and senior citizens, as their informal support networks were severed and new environment lacked adequate accessibility or traditional roles. Despite these challenges, instances of mutual aid among neighbours demonstrated the community's resilience in seeking to rebuild connections. Figure 5 below visually represents the complex interplay and reinforcing nature of these social disruptions, demonstrating how the breakdown in one area cascaded to affect others.

**Figure 2 - Interconnectedness of Social Disruptions**



**Source:** Developed by author based on empirical data

#### 4.1.2 Economic Experiences

Economic hardship was a central reality post-relocation. Participants described the loss of traditional livelihoods, subsistence farming and small-scale diamond panning, as well as inadequate and delayed compensation. The community widely felt their possessions were undervalued, and the compensation process lacked transparency. A key informant from a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) highlighted the systemic nature of these delays:

"The pattern of delayed and insufficient compensation was not accidental. It was a deliberate tactic that kept the community perpetually on the back foot. It was a mechanism of control, not restoration."

The loss of natural capital was significant, as access to vital resources that supported diverse livelihoods was severed. Rumbidzai, \* a married woman with a physical disability, illustrated this with the example of the baobab tree:

"The baobab tree was like a mother to us in Marange. It was part of our wealth, a living bank account. In Arda Transau, that life is gone. The baobab does not grow here, and we have no access to anything like it that could replace its value."

Furthermore, robust informal financial systems, such as Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (*mukando*), disintegrated due to the scattering of communities and erosion of trust. Kudzai, \* a male carpenter, explained:

"We used to do ISALs in Marange, which helped us a lot. But now, with everyone scattered those things have fallen apart. The trust is broken."

Adapting to a new agricultural landscape proved challenging. Fertile ancestral lands were replaced by unfamiliar, poorer soils, rendering traditional farming knowledge less applicable and limiting yields. Finally, the burden of new resource costs, mostly for water, added immense strain. Jacob, a male divorcee, said:

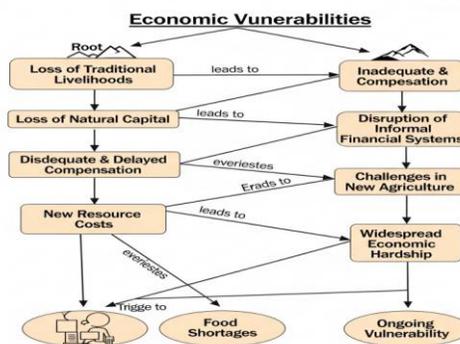
"In Chiadzwa, we could get water from the river or our wells for free. Now, we have to pay for it every month, and it is difficult when we do not have enough money even for food."

This was echoed by Takudzwa, \* a young male participant, who added:

"Paying for water is just one more burden on families already struggling to survive. It feels like they replaced one problem with ten others, and all of them cost money we do not have."

These combined economic disruptions led to widespread hardship, food shortages, and persistent vulnerability, undermining the community's ability to achieve basic well-being. Figure 6 illustrates the interplay of causes and effects that characterized the community's economic hardships post-relocation, highlighting how different factors compounded each other.

Figure 3 - Economic Vulnerabilities Post-MIR



Source: Developed by author based on empirical data

#### 4.1.3 Political and Governance Experiences

The relocation process stripped the Arda Transau community of its political agency, fostering a sense of helplessness. The process was characterized by a lack of meaningful consultation, with decisions imposed top-down. Moses, \* a former community leader, described this as a violation of their self-determination:

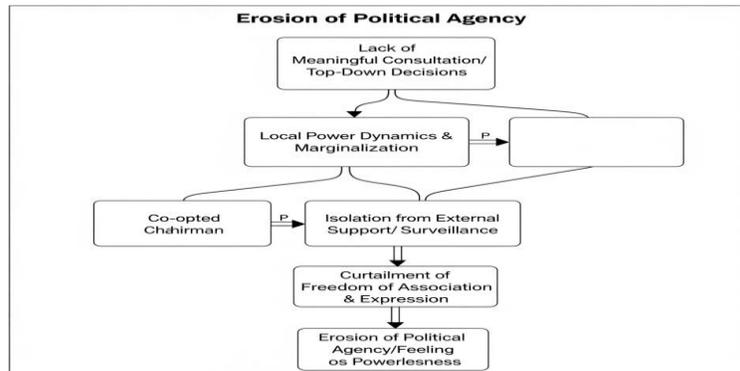
"They just told us we were moving. There was no real discussion, no negotiation, no one asked us what we thought. We were presented with a done deal, leaving us with no option but to comply."

Once relocated, local power dynamics exacerbated their marginalization. Decision-making was perceived as controlled by co-opted local figures who stifled dissent. Danny, \* a married man aged 40-49, highlighted the climate of fear:

"If you tried to question anything, the chairman would make things difficult for you. People learned quickly to keep quiet, even when they were suffering, because speaking out had consequences."

The community reported significant isolation from external support, as NGOs and human rights groups faced surveillance and restrictions. This limited access to information, legal aid, and advocacy, further entrenching their vulnerability. The curtailment of freedom of association and expression was also evident, with efforts to organize or openly discuss grievances met with suspicion, disproportionately affecting youth and women. Attempts to advocate through official channels, like the Arda Transau Relocation Development Trust (ATRD), were undermined by internal and external pressures, leading to disappointment and a sense of hopelessness. Furthermore, reports of a lack of accountability and transparency from the Mutare District Council reinforced their powerlessness. Figure 7 illustrates the process through which their political voice was undermined, leading to a sense of powerlessness.

**Figure 4 - Erosion of Political Agency post-MIR**



**Source:** Developed by author based on empirical data

#### 4.1.4 Cultural Experiences

Beyond tangible losses, the involuntary relocation inflicted cultural dislocation, impacting the community's identity and spiritual well-being. The loss of sacred and ancestral sites in Chiadzwa and Marange caused spiritual emptiness. Shaylen, \* a single mother with a visual impairment, shared her grief:

*"Our shrines, the places where we connected with our ancestors are gone. It feels like we are cut off from our roots. They took our spiritual home, our very connection to the spiritual realm, leaving us adrift."*

This loss was devastating as ancestral reverence and rituals were central to their identity. The relocation also led to the erosion of elder roles and a threat to intergenerational cultural reproduction. Elders, once esteemed knowledge keepers, found their wisdom less applicable and their ability to transmit traditions hampered by physical scattering. Moses, \* an elder, voiced this concern:

*"Our children no longer come to us for stories or advice as they used to. We feel our wisdom is fading, and they are growing up without knowing their own mutupo (Totem in English) system or the deep stories of our people from Marange."*

Furthermore, traditional leadership structures (*Mambo, Sadunhu, Sabhuku*) were disrupted and co-opted, weakening their authority and the customary justice systems. Fadzayi, \* an adult woman recounted:

*"In Marange, if there was a problem, we would go to the chief. But in Arda Transau, the traditional leaders did not have the same power, and things were different."*

Finally, challenges of cultural adaptation and experiences of alienation arose from being forced to cohabit with diverse groups in Arda Transau. Harriet, a female vendor, captured this struggle:

*"The people here have their own ways. Sometimes it feels like we do not fit in, like we are outsiders in our own home."*

Despite these overwhelming challenges, some community members sought to preserve their heritage by sharing stories and finding new ways to celebrate cultural events, demonstrating a resilient determination to maintain their identity. However, as one elder, Kudzai, \* described, the cultural impact:

*"Our culture is like a tree with deep roots. When you uproot it, it struggles to grow in new soil. Our children are growing up without the same connection to their traditions and history, and it breaks my heart."*

This highlights the enduring human cost of cultural loss in the context of involuntary relocation.

## Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

The empirical findings from Arda Transau reveal a complex tapestry of interconnected disruptions across social, economic, political/governance, and cultural dimensions. These lived experiences corroborate the well-documented negative consequences of MIR in contemporary scholarship [25], [26], [27], [28]. Within the Zimbabwean context, they resonate with analyses by scholars such as Mandishekwa and Mutenheri [29] and Sachikonye [30], who similarly highlighted the devastating impacts on livelihoods and social structures. The empirical corroboration from Arda Transau informs the conceptualization and justification for proactive, in-depth pre-relocation evaluation as a non-negotiable step for mitigating relocation risks.

The Arda Transau community's experience marked by the fracturing of deep-seated social networks, the loss of diversified land-based livelihoods, political disempowerment, and cultural disruption aligns with Cernea's [8] widely influential Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model. The economic hardship, characterized by the community's transition from diversified communal farming to unstable informal trading, exemplifies Cernea's risks of joblessness and effective landlessness. Simultaneously, the breakdown of traditional support systems, as by participants like Peter regarding family scattering and Blessing concerning religious community loss, manifests social disarticulation and the loss of both bonding and bridging social capital [18].

However, the Arda Transau case transcends mere corroboration. It highlights the nuances of these risks within a context-specific Zimbabwean setting, thereby emphasizing the need for tailored, participatory impact assessments rather than generic checklists [31]. The detailed narratives, especially those describing the interconnectedness of social ties and resource access in Chiadzwa and Marange, underscore how simplistic compensation models, failing to account for ecological, cultural, and social embeddedness [32], [33], exacerbate impoverishment. This extends existing literature by arguing that each relocation context is unique, demanding an embedded, rather than superficial, understanding of a community's vulnerabilities and strengths.

Furthermore, the Arda Transau narratives provide a deeper, disaggregated understanding of these disruptions, revealing the challenges faced by already vulnerable subgroups. For example, the difficulties reported by youth in forming new social bonds, as expressed by Tawanda and Loreen, resonate with broader literature on youth vulnerability in relocation [34], but underline the challenge of rebuilding peer networks without established social infrastructure. Similarly, the increased marginalization experienced by persons with disabilities, when familiar support systems and accessible routes were dismantled, offers an illustration of how existing vulnerabilities are exacerbated by social disarticulation and a lack of inclusive planning, speaking to the concept of differentiated vulnerability [35], [36]. The accounts of elders losing intergenerational connections and their traditional roles as custodians of knowledge (Moses's concern) highlight the often intangible, long-term social and psychological costs of relocation [37], [28], urging for more longitudinal investigation in MIR studies [38]. These findings collectively emphasize the imperative for demographically sensitive assessments that capture the intersectional nature of vulnerability.

Economically, the disruption of informal financial networks, such as the community-based ISALs highlighted by Kudzai, highlights a less examined but crucial aspect of economic vulnerability in MIR. This erosion of vital, community-based informal safety nets disproportionately affects women and other marginalized groups who often lack access to formal financial institutions [39], [40]. This specific finding extends economic relocation literature by emphasizing the vulnerability in neglecting these non-formal financial mechanisms. The increased burden of new resource costs, such as water, as articulated by Jacob and Takudzwa, also challenges simplistic compensation models by revealing an added, ongoing financial strain often overlooked in initial valuations. This spectrum of economic disruption validates the urgency for pre-relocation assessments to assess the full scope of economic dependencies, extending beyond income to include non-monetary assets and informal economic systems.

Politically, the Arda Transau community's experiences of lacking meaningful consultation and powerlessness speak to a restriction of their human capabilities, their capacity for practical reason and political agency [16]. Their limited access to information, scarce resources, and the near-complete inability to influence decisions reflect the structural inequalities in MIR contexts, undermining their linking social capital [18]. This aligns with perspectives on the governance of relocation in extractive industries, which highlight the top-down, non-transparent nature of these processes [41], [42]. The reported influence of co-opted local figures, as described by Danny, and the curtailment of freedoms of association and expression, echo long-standing concerns about elite capture and political manipulation in relocation contexts [43], [44]. The disillusionment with the ATRDT further underlines the challenges in establishing transparent and accountable governance structures in post-relocation settings [45]. This interplay of powerlessness and compromised agency reinforces the critical importance of addressing power imbalances to ensure just outcomes in any relocation framework.

Finally, the cultural disruption, including the irreplaceable loss of cultural sites and the undermining of traditional leadership struc-

tures, aligns with classical anthropological studies on involuntary relocation [46], [8]. Shaylen's lament over spiritual connections to ancestral shrines and burial grounds resonates with works on the spiritual significance of land in African contexts [47], extending the understanding of "loss" beyond the material to the existential. The challenges faced by elders in maintaining and transmitting cultural traditions (Moses's concern) highlight the intergenerational dimensions of cultural loss where invaluable knowledge and oral histories risk being lost [48], emphasizing the need for mechanisms for cultural preservation post-relocation [49]. The difficulties of cultural adaptation, as experienced by Harriet, in a new environment with diverse cultural norms, shows that cultural integration is not automatic but a complex, often painful process. This cultural loss, marked by spiritual distress, validates the necessity of addressing the psychological and cultural dimensions within any integrated framework, emphasizing that well-being post-relocation is inseparable from the preservation of spiritual and cultural integrity.

## Conclusion

This in-depth qualitative study of the Arda Transau community's life after relocation highlights important conclusions about the impacts of MIR on their daily experiences. Involuntary relocation broke apart existing social networks and community structures. This broke down community bonds, leading to widespread isolation, a feeling of not belonging, and making vulnerable people (like those with disabilities) even more isolated by cutting off their established support systems. However, despite these breakdowns, the community also showed a strong desire to rebuild connections and mutual support, even in extremely difficult circumstances.

The Arda Transau experience shows a permanent loss of traditional, land-based ways of making a living, made worse by unfair and inadequate compensation. This led to ongoing economic hardship for the community, as new, expensive economic models were forced upon them without enough support. This affected women, the elderly, and those with few other options. Yet, individuals and groups showed resourcefulness in trying new ways to earn money and creating informal financial solidarity, although these efforts were often not enough to overcome the wider problems.

The lack of real involvement and consultation led to a feeling of powerlessness. Decisions were seen as being made by a single powerful figure, which weakened the relocated community's ability to act and stopped their disagreements. Limits on their freedoms and alleged political interference in community initiatives further broke down trust and stopped collective action, leaving the community without power. Despite this difficult situation, there were quiet acts of persistence and attempts to seek other ways to express their concerns, showing a strong desire to have control over their own lives.

MIR results in cultural disruption, affecting identity and spiritual well-being. The loss of cultural and spiritual sites and the reduced authority of traditional leadership created a deep cultural sadness and a feeling of not belonging. This hinders the passing of cultural knowledge and identity from one generation to the next, leaving a permanent gap. Nevertheless, community members tried to preserve their heritage through oral traditions and by adjusting cultural practices, showing their strong commitment to identity.

This study shows that the impacts of MIR are complex, breaking down social connections, economic stability, political power, and cultural identity at the same time. The challenges faced by Arda Transau, such as their dependence on certain natural resources (like the baobab tree), the collapse of informal financial systems, and local political dynamics, show that general, top-down relocation approaches are damaging. Each situation demands a thorough analysis before relocation that looks at both the challenges and the community's strengths, especially for vulnerable groups. This research provides detailed, real-world insights into the long-term human costs of displacement. It offers a powerful qualitative lens to help develop MIR plans that are fairer, allow for more participation, and are sustainable, protecting the well-being and dignity of relocated people.

## Key Recommendations

Based on the lived experiences and key findings from the Arda Transau community, the following recommendations are vital for dealing with the challenges of MIR and ensuring fairer results in practice and policy:

### **Address Social Breakdowns: Support Community-Building Initiatives.**

To mend the broken social ties found in Arda Transau, it is recommended to support community-building efforts. This means helping communities start or restart social networks and support groups to rebuild connections. Encourage regular, community-led meetings and activities that strengthen relationships and offer emotional and mental support. This will help reduce feelings of isolation and not belonging, addressing the damaged social structures observed.

### **Economic Recovery: Create Tailored Livelihood Programmes.**

To address the economic hardship, especially the loss of traditional livelihoods and inadequate compensation, tailored programmes are needed for economic recovery. Design and implement specific programmes to help people restore their ways of making a living, focusing on their traditional activities like suitable farming, local crafts, and small businesses, acknowledging their previous reliance on natural resources like the baobab tree. Provide specific training, resources, and access to markets to help them become self-

sufficient. Crucially, ensure compensation is given on time and is enough for them to truly rebuild their lives, covering not just immediate losses but also supporting new starts. This counters the loss of livelihoods and unfair payments found, building on the community's efforts to find new economic support.

#### **Boost Political Participation: Set Up Inclusive Governance Structures.**

To address the widespread feeling of powerlessness and lack of involvement, it is vital to boost political participation by setting up inclusive governance structures. This means making it a requirement for communities to truly take part in all decisions related to relocation planning, carrying it out, and managing resources afterwards. Power should be given to officially recognised local committees and community-chosen representatives so they can speak up effectively. This will promote accountability from all involved parties, including the Mutare District Council, and tackle the documented lack of community power, building on the community's own desire to express their concerns.

#### **Protect Culture: Start Cultural Heritage Programmes.**

To respond to the cultural disruption and loss of identity, it is important to protect culture by starting cultural heritage programmes. Develop and support programmes aimed at preserving cultural practices, including intangible heritage like stories and songs, and honouring sacred sites (even if they have been moved or are now represented symbolically). Involve the community, especially elders, in recording their heritage and encourage the passing of knowledge from older to younger generations. This addresses the identified cultural loss and supports the community's own efforts to maintain their identity.

#### **Better Planning Before Relocation: Conduct Full Assessments of Strengths and Needs.**

Better planning before any relocation is essential, starting with full assessments of community strengths and needs. It is crucial to carry out thorough assessments, with full community participation, to understand both the community's strengths (their existing social structures and traditional knowledge) and their specific needs and vulnerabilities. This includes understanding the unique challenges for different groups like women, young people, and those with disabilities, and their reliance on certain resources like the baobab tree. This vital information must guide the design of all outside support efforts, making sure they are relevant, effective, and sensitive to local situations, rather than simply imposing general solutions. This is a key lesson from Arda Transau's unique challenges.

#### **Targeted Support: Implement Specific and Customised Help.**

To ensure lasting recovery, it is vital to implement specific and customised help. This means designing and putting in place support programmes that are carefully tailored to deal with the unique and complex challenges identified through strong community involvement and assessments. This approach moves beyond one-size-fits-all solutions by adjusting help to meet the specific needs of different groups within the relocated community (e.g., women, young people, elderly, and people with disabilities). This will maximise their positive impact and help achieve lasting recovery, directly responding to the distinct challenges uncovered among the Arda Transau people.

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