**ZIMBABWE**

While the Government of Zimbabwe does not recognise any specific groups as indigenous to the country, two peoples self-identify as indigenous: the Tshwa (Tsoa, Cuaa) San found in western Zimbabwe, and the Doma (Vadema) of north-central Zimbabwe. Population estimates indicate there are 2,600 Tshwa and 1,150 Doma in Zimbabwe, approximately 0.03% of the country’s population.

Many of the Tshwa and Doma live below the poverty datum line in Zimbabwe and together make up some of the poorest people in the country. Available socio-economic data is limited for both groups, though baseline data was collected for the Tshwa in late 2013. While available information on Tshwa communities has increased, information regarding the Doma is very limited.

Though somewhat improved in recent years, realisation of core human rights in Zimbabwe continues to be challenging. Zimbabwe is a signatory to the UNDRIP, CERD, CRC, CEDAW, ICCPR and ICESCR; reporting on these conventions is largely overdue, but there have been recent efforts to meet requirements. In recent years Zimbabwe has also participated in the UPR process. Like many African states, Zimbabwe has not ratified ILO Convention No. 169.

There are no specific laws on indigenous peoples’ rights in the country. However the ‘Koisan’ language is included in the Zimbabwe Constitution as one of the 16 languages recognized in the country, and there is some recognition within government of the need for more information and improved approaches to minorities in the country.

**Overview**

Two peoples self-identify as indigenous in Zimbabwe. The Tshwa (Tsoa, Cuaa) San, one of the many distinct San groups living in southern Africa, are found in the Tsholotsho District of Matabeleland North Province and the Bulilima-Mangwe District of Matabeleland South Province in western Zimbabwe. The Tshwa share many cultural and linguistic similarities with the Tshwa and Shua peoples found in neighbouring areas of Botswana, although they appear to be a separate group.

The Doma (Vadema) of Chapoto Ward of Guruve District and Mbire District of Mashonaland Central Province and Karoi District of Mashonaland West Province reside in the Zambezi Valley of northern Zimbabwe. Both the Tshwa and Doma have histories of foraging and continue to rely to a limited extent on wild plant, animal, and insect resources. Most Tshwa and Doma households tend to have diversified economies, often working for members of other groups in agriculture, pastoralism, tourism, and small-scale business enterprises.

Up-to-date information on the Doma is very limited. Reports suggest the Doma face similar discrimination, food insecurity, low levels of employment, and lack of access to social services as do the Tshwa.[[1]](#endnote-2) There is more data on the Tshwa, who consider themselves to be ‘the forgotten people’ because of the low levels of development assistance that they receive.[[2]](#endnote-3)

**Policy and Legislation**

The terms “indigenous”, “indigeneity”, and “indigenisation” are used frequently by the Government of Zimbabwe when referring to black Zimbabweans considered disadvantaged before independence, and the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act that stipulates all foreign-owned companies have Zimbabweans in a controlling position.

Awareness of minority groups in Zimbabwe has grown in the past several years, though political and economic barriers persist as key factors in limiting effective engagement and political participation. Issues facing San, Doma, or other minorities in Zimbabwe were not taken up during the last Universal Periodic Review of Zimbabwe (2011) nor have they been mentioned in African Union reports.

The Zimbabwe government took into consideration a draft report and baseline data on the San of Matabeleland North Province that was completed and circulated in early 2015, with support from the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The finalised report, funded by IWGIA and OSISA (Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa), will be available in early 2016.[[3]](#endnote-4)

While at a SADC meeting in May, President Robert Mugabe stated he considered that the San resist integration with neighbouring communities, rebuff civilization, shun education, integration and development.[[4]](#endnote-5)

**The Tsoro-o-tso San Development Trust**

An important strategy of the Tshwa San was to form their own community-based organization, the Tsoro-o-tso San Development Trust (TSDT), the only San community-based organisation in the country. The district of Tsholotsho, where most Tshwa live, does not have any Community Share Ownership Trusts (CSOTs) which are common in other districts and are an outgrowth of the implementation of the *Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act* (IEEA). Zimbabwe, unlike some of the other southern African states with San populations, has no overarching national level organizations that deal with indigenous or minority rights.

The Tshwa have lobbied for greater attention to be paid to Tshwa culture and for more development resources to be made available to them.[[5]](#endnote-6) The Tsholotsho Rural District Council signed a memorandum of agreement with the TSDT in March, 2015,[[6]](#endnote-7) despite some district level government staff criticising the Tshwa for attempting to undermine government development activities. This MOU outlined what the TSDT would do to improve the lives and preserve the language and culture of the Tshwa and what the district authorities would provide in terms of services and support in these efforts.

TSDT activities continued throughout the year, including numerous advocacy stories in the Zimbabwe national press and a San cultural festival held in October. In August TSDT arranged for Tshwa delegates to take part in a SADC-NGO forum in Botswana with San from other countries in Southern Africa, in order to present issues to various SADC regional bodies on poverty reduction and intellectual property rights. The latter became more relevant in September with the publicising of San rock art sites in Tsholotsho.[[7]](#endnote-8)

**Language**

The number of fluent speakers of the Tjoao (Tjwao, Tshwao) language may be less than 50, all of them elderly, At least one elderly fluent Tjoao speaker died during 2015. This means that the language can be classified as “critically endangered”. However, efforts to keep it alive continued in 2015. The University of Zimbabwe and the Tsoro-o-tso San Development Trust made some progress with the Tjoao (Tshwao) language documentation in 2015. The orthography was further developed, and a basic 500-word list exists, as well as some preliminary teaching materials. A linguist, Anne-Maria Fehn, is in the process of completing an article summarizing the Tjoao grammar and Lupane State University’s Department of Language and Communication Studies have been carrying research into Tjoao dialects.[[8]](#endnote-9) In an effort to improve Tjoao learning the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education stated in June that it would build a school for the San. [[9]](#endnote-10)

**Food and Water Security**

Like other parts of southern Africa, Zimbabwe was hit hard by drought and hunger in 2015.[[10]](#endnote-11) Crops failed, livestock and wild animals died, and loans were called back by lenders. Tshwa and their neighbours in western Zimbabwe lined up for food aid distributions, which were insufficient to meet their needs. Some people ate the seeds that they had stored for the November planting season, while others fell back on foraging. The World Food Program estimated that a tenth of Zimbabwe’s population of 14,229,541 was totally dependent of food aid.[[11]](#endnote-12)

Government and NGO projects in the Tsholotsho District including CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) had some minor impacts on employment and effects on Tshwa and Doma communities.[[12]](#endnote-13) A World Bank and GEF funded CBRNM project which includes part of Tsholotsho District, Hwange Sanyati Biological Corridor Project (HSBCP),[[13]](#endnote-14) was launched in March, and may improve livelihood opportunities for the San.

Acute water shortages affected Tsholotsho District during 2015, and drops in water table levels forced many villages to ration water. Additionally, many water facilities that had operated in Tsholotsho and Bulilima-Mangwe as well as in Hwange National Park had to be shut down because of lack of diesel fuel and pump parts. During 2015, 20 new boreholes were planned for the District, but it is not clear whether all of these were established and whether all areas benefited.[[14]](#endnote-15)

After the drought had affected crop production and livestock numbers, unusually heavy rains in November caused flooding and destroyed homesteads,[[15]](#endnote-16) damaged schools and killed large numbers of livestock. Additional flooding occurred in December. A number of NGO’s assisted with emergency food relief efforts while efforts for increased government support were made.

**Resettlement, Relocation and Judicial Issues**

The security situation for the Tshwa was exacerbated by the killing of a collared lion (mis)named Cecil by an American dentistin July 2015, after it was lured out of Hwange National Park by a professional safari guide. A worldwide outcry about the ethics of sport hunting ensued.[[16]](#endnote-17) Some people outside of Zimbabwe said that all hunting should be stopped. There were also those who argued that trophy hunting can help save lions.[[17]](#endnote-18) The debates have worried some Tshwa who were already feeling the brunt of pressures from the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the Zimbabwe state police. They were particularly concerned about the possibility of cessation of hunting, as had occurred in Botswana in 2014, since some Tshwa and Doma get short-term employment on occasion with safari companies and benefit from some of the meat from such hunts.

There were unconfirmed reports that several Tshwa were arrested on suspicion of having played a role in elephant poisonings using cyanide in Hwange in November 2015, although no further action appears to have been taken. Two other villagers and a ranger from Hwange were charged, one of a number of rangers arrested in 2015.[[18]](#endnote-19) An editorial opinion in *Newsday* called for the tightening of security in Zimbabwe’s national parks and greater cooperation with local communities.[[19]](#endnote-20)

On 23 December 2015, Zimbabwe’s Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Oppah Chamu Zvipange Muchinguri announced that the government was going to engage the Joint Operations Command of the Zimbabwe army in anti-poaching efforts in the country. She also said that a kingpin in the crime syndicates involving elephant ivory trafficking had been arrested,[[20]](#endnote-21) But that Zimbabwe needed international assistance in combating the poaching problem.

Mrs. Muchinguri also said that Zimbabwe was facing a serious “climate-related crisis” at the COP 21 Climate Change meetings in Paris held from 20 November - 1December 2015. Unlike Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, Zimbabwe did not send any San or Doma to the COP 21 meetings, though Tshwa representatives have taken part in local workshops on climate change.

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