WINDHOEK - Namibia is building a three-billion-dollar port that will unlock the economic potential of growing trade in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The new harbour, which is being developed by the Namibia Ports Authority (Namport), is situated just north of Namibia’s existing Walvis Bay Port on the Atlantic Ocean. With trade in the region growing, cargo volumes are currently at 650,000 tonnes and will soon exceed the capacity of the existing harbour, the port authority has unveiled a master plan to fast track the building of the massive infrastructure project, already dubbed the SADC Gateway Port. It will be situated north of the current Walvis Bay Port.

Namport chief executive officer Bisey Uirab told TerraViva that the area is ideally suited to function as a gateway into the subcontinent. “Trade within SADC through the port has grown significantly in the past few years. Especially through the Trans-Caprivi corridor where trade volumes with the mining areas in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo have seen a great surge.”

“On the Trans-Kalahari route, trade with Botswana and the Gauteng Province in South Africa has picked up considerably, from an [initial] low base,” he added.

According to Namport, only 20 percent of its trade volumes are destined for Namibia – an arid upper-middle income country with just over two million inhabitants. The bulk of trade travels to the SADC hinterland by road, or is transshipped to destinations in West Africa, making Walvis Bay one of the busiest ports on Africa’s western coast.

Uirab hailed Walvis Bay as a credible and viable alternative to other trade routes, which traditionally run from economic powerhouse, South Africa, into the region.

“Construction on the SADC Gateway will start with tanker berth. Petroleum is a strategic commodity and countries in the region are always looking on how to secure their supply through different routes. Walvis Bay gives neighbour ing landlocked countries options,” Uirab said.

He feels the port is well placed to compete with congested regional ports. “Namibia provides a stable, political and legal environment, with excellent road infrastructure, which makes it attractive as a gateway destination, especially when trading with Europe and the Americas.”

He added that the current Walvis Bay port was able to handle cargo fast and efficiently, “establishing turnaround times of 48 hours or less, with very little hassle or spillage.”

He said that through public-private partnerships the amount of red tape at both the port and Namibia’s borders had been reduced to a minimum.

The new port, which will be constructed on 1,330 hectares of land, will feature a tanker berth for very large crude carriers, a fuel storage facility, a ship and rig repair yard, and supply stations for the oil and gas exploration industry. It will also have additional container and dry bulk terminals, and terminals for passengers and imported cars. The undercovered dry bulk terminal will be able to handle over 100 million tonnes of cargo per year.

Railway lines and roads will connect the harbour to new industrial parks and construction on will start next year.

Continued on page 3
Between 2003 and 2009, the country had one of the worst rail networks, connecting trains between Harare and Bulawayo and linking the country with Mozambique, the country’s rail network, restoring the railway services.

Independent economist Richard Lalton added that there is a possibility that it could mean the end of this southern African nation’s railway system. “It is unfortunate that the railroad transport system is turning idle and may for the first time in history be phased out in Zimbabwe,” he told IPS.

According to statistics from the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), just before 2012 there were 120,000 daily train commuters countrywide. It has since dropped by 20 percent, a figure that NRZ officials said continues to fall.

“We used to have regular local commuter trains, but now they are rarely available and (minibus) taxi operators are daily milking us of our hard-earned cash,” Dickson Chimambwi, a commuter from Harare’s Budiriro high-density suburb, told IPS.

Locally, minibus taxis charge between 0.50 dollars per trip to and from town, fares which often double during peak hours as taxi operators take advantage of desperate commuters who have little or no alternative transport. It is steep compared to the 0.20 dollars that commuter trains charge per trip to and from town.

But these commuter train services are now rare. Speaking to IPS on condition of anonymity, top NRZ officials in Harare told IPS that the railway’s numerous locomotives, wagons and coaches were now out of order, resulting in the struggling company battling to keep most of its workers.

Disgruntled NRZ workers continually protest for increased transport costs, ordinary citizens and pensioners will be strained by consequent increases in prices of basic commodities.

Women vendors are among those hit by the reduced commuter rail services as they used to rely heavily on the trains to get to Mbare-Musika, an old, poor township in Harare, which has a major trading fruit and vegetable market.

“Commuter trains used to charge us 0.20 dollars per trip, but now we rarely see them operating,” 43-year-old Margret Chihwai, a vendor and single mother from Mufakose, a low-income suburb in Harare, told IPS.

She said to get to the market now she has to use minibuses and taxi’s per dollar per trip during morning peak hours.

Many who once operated as vendors on commuter trains, like the blind 45-year-old Gaikai Zinhu, have since plunged into suffering.

“I used to follow commuter trains on a daily basis, vending on the trains and that used to help me sustain my family. But now I’m without means to fend for my family,” Zinhu told IPS.

Meanwhile, industrialist Nickson Mhike told IPS that some-time needed to be done soon to avoid a crisis.

“Zimbabwe may face the subsequent disappearance of commuter and goods trains if urgent efforts are not made on time to solve the crisis at the NRZ inflicted by a decade-long economic meltdown,” he said.

But many are afraid that without trains, and with the increased transport costs, ordinary citizens and pensioners will be strained by consequent increases in prices of basic commodities.

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Opposition to the Batoka Dam Mounts

By Ignatius Banda

ULAWAYO - The construction of the multi-billion-dollar Batoka Gorge Dam, a joint venture between Zambia and Zimbabwe, may be expected to produce 1,600 megawatts of electricity. But it is generating another kind of heat as opposition to the project continues.

On both sides of the Zambezi, critics have asked whether the countries need such a massive project amid complaints that there is little to show that the dam will be a boon for local economies.

Last year, International Rivers, a global NGO that works in the protection of rivers and the rights of communities that depend on these rivers, issued a report condemning the dam project, citing that its construction did not take into consideration climate change, which could see a decrease in rainfall.

"Zambezi runoff is expected to decrease by 26 to 40 percent by 2050," Lori Pottinger, International Rivers Communications and Africa Programme officer, told TerraViva.

"Despite concerns about the changing climate, the design and operation of both the Batoka Gorge and Mphanda Nkuwa (in Mozambique) dams have been based on historical hydrological records and have not been evaluated for risks from more extreme drought and flood cycles. This is irresponsible and could result in very poor-performing and uneconomic projects," Pottinger said.

Online protests have also been launched against the giant project with the launch of the "Stop The Batoka Dam On The Zambezi River" campaign by Zambian activists last year.

"Large, complex projects such as the hydropower schemes on the Congo and Zambezi rivers do not boost local economies. They rely on imported technologies and know-how, and do not create a significant number of domestic jobs," Peter Bosshard, Policy Director of International Rivers, told TerraViva.

"In contrast, decentralised renewable energy projects such as solar, wind, micro hydropower and improved cooking stoves would be more effective at reaching the majority of the people in Africa and South Asia who are not connected to the electric grid," Bosshard said.

According to hydrologist Richard Beifuss, it is not only climate change concerns that weigh against the Batoka project.

"Climate change scenarios alter not only the financial performance of hydropower schemes such as Batoka, but also the financial risks they face. Changes in climate lead to significant variability in economic performance – reducing not only the mean values for energy production, but also the reliability of electricity sales income," Beifuss told TerraViva.

In June, the International Rivers' World Rivers Review raised concern that the Batoka dam wall, which is expected to be more than 190 metres tall and will produce an artificial lake of more than 50 kilometres, will affect other activities on the Zambezi. The review noted that "the Batoka scheme will flood the gorge and drown the massive rapids that have made Victoria Falls a prime whitewater rafting location."

Despite these concerns, the Batoka Dam project, mainly funded by the World Bank, is being hailed by Zambia and Zimbabwe as the answer to the region's power deficit.

"Ultimately, the development of the port of Walvis Bay and the Walvis Bay corridors is clearly an advantage to accelerate growth for Namibia and the SADC region by offering Southern Africa an alternative gateway," he thinks.

But challenges remain: especially since transport costs are prohibitive. According to Namport, the transport sector needs to increase capacity, as this remains one of the highest costs in the cost of goods to the consumer. Transport costs in SADC are up to four times higher than that of its European counterparts, representing a significant barrier to trade and economic development.

Uirab advocates further investment in transport corridors to unlock the high potential, resource-rich areas such as the Zambezi rivers do not boost local economies. They rely on imported technologies and know-how, and do not create a significant number of domestic jobs," Peter Bosshard, Policy Director of International Rivers, told TerraViva.

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Three Billion Dollar SADC Gateway to Further Regional Trade

Continued from page 1 ... A new 12-billion-dollar railway line, the Trans-Kalahari Railway, is being planned between the Mmamabula coal field in Botswana and Walvis Bay. It is expected to bring significant business to the new port and justify the massive investment, officials claim.

But Namport, together with sister company Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG), has been working for a decade to become the gateway for the growing economies of its neighbours - some of which consistently rack up growth rates of over six percent per year. It aims to be a feasible alternative for congested South African ports.

The port authority has gone as far as establishing dry ports for neighbouring countries, allowing them to conduct trade operations on sovereign territory using the port of Walvis Bay.

"Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana have dry port facilities," the port authority notes in a statement. "Dry Ports are designed to improve trade from those countries but also offer those sovereign nations a dedicated access to their market in the Port of Walvis Bay. The Zambian facility is well developed with a top class facility designed to handle both containers and freezer capabilities. The Botswana dry port is being developed."

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Crescimento na SADC Exige Mais Infra-estruturas e Menos Barreiras

Por John Fraser

OANESBURGO - Os especialistas concordam que um instrumento fundamental para desbloquear o potencial econômico da Comunidade de Desenvolvimento da África Austral (SADC) é a flexibilidade dos fluxos transfronterizos de pessoas, bens, capitais e serviços.

No entanto, mesmo se os controles fronteiriços forem eliminados, é necessário fazer muito mais para melhorar estradas, caminhos-de-ferro, abastecimento de electricidade e outras infra-estruturas na região — e combater as barreiras não tarifárias informais que assumem a forma de burocracia excessiva e restrições que impedem o desenvolvimento.

Em Junho, um grupo de líderes da SADC reuniu-se em Maputo, Moçambique, para participar numa Conferência da SADC sobre Investimentos em Infra-estruturas — tendo o Presidente sul-africano, Jacob Zuma, cancelado a sua participação à última hora devi-do a preocupações sobre a deterioração do estado de saúde do ícone Nelson Mandela.

Parte da agenda dizia respeito ao Plano do Sector dos Transportes, que se debucha sobre a liberalização dos mercados de transporte, o desenvolvimento de corredores de transporte e a facilitação de movimentos transfronterizos.

Confundo, Dianna Games, Directora Executiva da ‘Africa @ Work’, uma empresa de consultoria, disse a IPS que, embora estejam a ser tomadas medidas para eliminar as barreiras físicas aos movimentos transfronterizos, muitas vezes elas são substituídas por barreiras informais.

“Quando as barreiras tarifárias desaparecem, multiplicam-se as barreiras não tarifári-as — causando atrasos nos postos fronteiriços e postos fronteiriços pouco eficientes, o pior dos quais é o posto fronteiriço de Beit Bridge entre a África do Sul e o Zimbabwe,” disse.

“Esta situação já devia ter sido resolvida há muito tempo — e sugere que, embora sejam proferidas muitas declarações a favor da liberalização do comércio, os países continuam a ter mais protecção para seus próprios mercados,” disse.

A Directora Executiva da Accenture, empresa de consultoria a nível de gestão sediada na África do Sul, Drª Rose Phillips, disse à IPS que “São necessárias uma maior facilitação do comércio e uma menor dependência da ajuda para acelerar o desenvolvimento econômico sustentável no continente. Muito simplesmente, precisamos de uma África que funcione.”

“Uma harmonização mais aprofundada das políticas comerciais, uma governação mais sólida e cooperação e investimento regional conjuntos são algumas das acções necessárias.”

Sublinhou ainda a necessidade de um investimento mais centrado na construção e na manutenção de infra-estruturas, como estradas, tecnologias de informação e comunicações, caminhos-de-ferro, abastecimento de água e de energia.

“A investigação da Accenture revela que o abastecimento pouco fiável de energia, por si só, conduz a perdas na produção industrial estimadas em 6% do volume de negócios das empresas,” aviso.

“Os custos do transporte rodoviário de mercadorias (em África) é duas a quatro vezes superior, por quilómetro, aos dos Estados Unidos, e os tempos de viagem ao longo dos principais corredores de exportação são duas ou três vezes mais elevados do que os da Ásia.”

“Por último, precisamos de diversificar as indústrias na SADC em que estamos a in vestir, incentivando e desenvolvendo à escala regional.”

Phillips sublinhou que não é suficiente que os países da SADC trabalhassem em conjunto no sentido de resolverem os desafios da região através de acordos entre governos.

“Tais acordos são fundamentais na promoção e facilitação da criação de novas oppor tumidades na indústria, tendo em conta, por exemplo, que Angola e a Nigéria registam as mais elevadas taxas de crescimento em África.”

No entanto, a Drª Rose Phillips salientou que a abertura de África não pode ser deixada apenas aos governos.

“O sector privado desempenha um papel essencial,” defendeu.

Croasing Borders With Trade

By Mantce Phakathi

MBABANE - Swaziland’s cross-border traders are barely able to make ends meet because of the high taxes and customs duties that they have to pay to import goods through this southern African nation’s border posts.

Hawkers who import second-hand clothing from neighbour- ing South Africa and Mozambique to the east, complain that they are highly taxed compared to their South African counterparts. Swaziland is bordered by South Africa and Mozambique to the east, and most traders get their stock from the two countries.

Dudu Fakudze has been selling second-hand clothing in the Swazi capital of Mbabane and goes to Mozambique every week to purchase stock.

“It’s always frustrating to bring in stock from Mozambique because the customs officials do not consider the value at which you bought the item,” complained Fakudze.

While the Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA) charges 14 percent value added tax (VAT) for goods coming from South Africa, a different formula applies to those imported from Mozambique.

“We are forced to pay either E450 (46 dollars) per bale or charged between E3 and E5 (30 and 50 cents) per item for import goods,” he said.

But he said it appeared that the application of this provi-sion for non-SACU countries would throw the traders out of business.

“After much engagement with hawkers’ representative, it was decided that a flat rate which provides for both customs duties and import VAT be used for a range of commonly imported goods,” he said.

But Sipho Mabaso, another hawker in Mbabane, said that corrupt officials from the SRA also added to the strain. He said he has been forced to pay bribes at the border gate.

“The SRA officials threaten to confiscate our goods if we don’t give them ‘cool drink’, which could cost anything be-tween E50 and E100 (five to 10 dollars),” Mabaso told TerraViva.

The situation is not any easier for traders importing goods from South Africa, according to Phantselumlwana Hawk- ers Association president, Mahbodwens Diamini. He said that because of the low number of customs staff at the border, the queues were usually very long, especially at the end of the month.

“Hawkers often spend as much as six hours at the border and when you get ahead of the line you are often very frus-trated,” said Diamini. “That’s when you forced to pay a bribe.”

He said some traders buy their wares from street vendors in South Africa who do not issue receipts. Although SRA is aware of this situation, he said, the customs officials refuse to accept the prices declared by the traders.

Diamini said SRA is going to determine which stations need more staff through the use of a clearly defined model in line with the customer service standards.

He added that since the establishment of SRA in 2011, the organisation has dismissed some of its staff for unethical be-haviour and corruption. He acknowledged that SRA has re ceived complaints from importers from Mozambique.

“However, when prompted for specifics the information falls from the cracks,” said Diamini.
L IlONGWE — Over two million families who solely depend on Lake Malawi for their livelihoods are anxiously putting their hopes into a mediation between Malawi and Tanzania intended to put an end to a longstanding ownership dispute which is expected to be concluded by September.

Both parties agreed in December to engage the assistance of the Forum for Former African Heads of State and Government, which is chaired by Mozambique’s former President Joachim Chissano.

“After several attempts to settle the dispute, we came to the realisation that we have failed and we needed a third party to help us,” principal secretary in Malawi’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Patrick Kambabe, told IPS.

“In January, Malawi submitted its position after agreeing that the Forum help us to settle the dispute,” Kambabe said.

In an interview with Tanzanian media, Kambabe’s Tanzanian counterpart John Haule confirmed that his country, too, had agreed to involving the former leaders and had submitted its own position paper to Chissano.

“The forum is now reviewing the document and we will thereafter seek consultation if it is needed,” according to Haule.

He said that he expected the matter to be settled in three months.

According to authorities, about 1.5 million Malawians and 600,000 Tanzanians depend on Africa’s third-largest lake for food, transportation and other daily needs.

When IPS visited Karonga District, on the shores of Lake Malawi, surrounding communities said they were worried about the increased tension and keen to see a resolution.

“I used to cross the border into Kyela in Tanzania every two weeks to exchange sugar for clothes, which I sell. But now I only go once a month because Tanzanian immigration officials at Songwe border have become very harsh and are mistreating us,” said Joyce Nyirongo, a mother of four. She was fearful to elaborate on the mistreatment.

“Tanzania has sought recourse to international law, which indicates that borders are generally in the middle of a body of water… Tanzania should therefore own half the lake,” said Chiume.

Tanzania’s position is that the treaty was flawed. Tanzania has remained resolute that it owns half of the lake — saying that the border runs through the middle of the lake excluding the section that lies in Mozambique.

Tanzania’s position is that a partition drawn in the middle of the lake, stressing that this is the practice among countries which share water bodies.

“The Heligoland Treaty gave the entire lake to us and this is what forms the basis of our position and proof that we own the section that lies in Mozambique,” said Chiume.

Both countries are hoping for the best outcome that will settle the dispute, once and for all when mediation begins this month.

Colonial treaty claims

Malawi’s first president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, was the first to claim that Lake Malawi was part of the southern African nation. He based his claim on the 1890 Heligoland Agreement between Britain and Germany, which stipulated that the border between the countries lay along the Tanzanian side of the lake.

The treaty was reaffirmed at the 1963 Organisation of African Unity Summit in Ethiopia and was reluctantly accepted by Tanzania.

Colonial treaty claims

Malawi’s Foreign Affairs Minister Ephraim Chiume told IPS that their position is based on the 1890 Treaty and that the African Union in 2002 and 2007 upheld the colonial agreement.

The conflict escalated last July when Malawi awarded oil exploration licenses to United Kingdom-based Surestream Petroleum.

And last December, Malawi awarded the second-largest license to SacOil Holdings Ltd. of South Africa, a move that deepened the crisis.

Twice, the two countries tried to resolve the dispute diplomatically, but to no avail.

Both countries are hoping for the best outcome that will settle the dispute, once and for all when mediation begins this month.

Environmental concerns

Meanwhile, the dispute has also brought to the fore the impact oil drilling would have on a fresh water lake blessed with over 2,000 different fish species, which attracts scuba divers the world over.

Local environmentalists fear that drilling in the lake will damage eco-tourism and the marine environment affecting the fishing region in the northern part of the country.

“It will endanger the social and economic lives of millions of people directly dependent on the lake for water, transport and most importantly fish for protein,” said Reginald Mumba of Rehabilitation of the Environment — a local environmental non-profit.

After direct talks between the two countries failed at the end of last year, Malawi President Joyce Banda had stated her intention to take the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

Politicians and fisherfolk alike now hope that the mediation process will expedite a peaceful resolution to the conflict without the involvement of the court.

By Mabvuto Banda

Two Million People Hold their Breath Over Lake Malawi Mediation

Over two million families who solely depend on Lake Malawi for their livelihoods are anxiously putting their hopes into a mediation between Malawi and Tanzania. Pictured here a Malawian fishing on Lake Malawi.

Credit: Claire Ngavo/IPS
The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Water Protocol is highly regarded globally as an example of regional integration over water. And according to Professor Anthony Turton, one of the foremost experts on water policy in Southern Africa and trustee of the Water Stewardship Council of Southern Africa, water remains a key component in development policy.

“Energy is a national developmental constraint for many countries, but if the hydro potential of SADC is fully realised then regional energy security will replace national deficiencies,” Turton told TerraViva.

“To do this we need regional cooperating over water, which is why the SADC Water Protocol was the first signed after South Africa joined the grouping. The private sector is now starting to come to the party, most notably in the mining and agribusiness sectors, where water and energy constraints are being recognised.”

Excerpts of the interview follow:

Q: In practical terms, do any worthwhile future/potential regional water projects come to mind?
A: On a grand scale there are major inter-basin transfer projects such as the Lesotho Highlands between Lesotho and South Africa; the North-South Carrier in Botswana; the Eastern National Water Carrier in Namibia and the Cunene-Cuvelai project between Angola and Namibia. Another interesting project is the first major desalination plant at Trekopje in Namibia. I believe this will be the first of many in the SADC region.

Q: What is the track record of past cooperation, in terms of success on the plus side or inefficiency and corruption on the other?
A: The SADC region is often cited in the global water sector as being the best example of water cooperation in transboundary resource management. The SADC Water Protocol is the foundation document for SADC regional integration, and serves the same purpose as the original coal, iron and steel agreements played in the creation of the EEC (European Economic Community) and later the EU (European Union). Cooperation over shared water in SADC is thus high.

Regarding corruption, the best case was that of [Masupha] Sole who was a senior executive in Lesotho that was indicted and imprisoned for corrupt dealings involving major construction companies, some of which were South African. That case became one of the world’s first in getting a conviction so I guess it is actually a good news story.

Q: Do you believe that climate change is a real threat to the region, and if so how might it have an impact or manifest itself?
A: In short yes. Greenhouse gas concentration is likely to raise ambient air temperatures by as much as four and maybe even six degrees Celsius in some parts of southern Africa – assuming a global rise of two degrees Celsius is “acceptable”. This will fundamentally alter the conversion ratio of rainfall to runoff, but it will also increase evaporative losses off dams.

An appropriate mitigation strategy is Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) (also known as Managed Aquifer Recharge - MAR), now a mainstream technology in places like California, Texas and Australia, but not yet in widespread use in the SADC region. I am currently working with an Australian technology provider to introduce this into Botswana. This stores water underground rather than in dams, preventing the losses to evaporation and thus greatly improving the sustainable yield of a given system.

Q: Why is there a need for SADC countries to cooperate over water issues?
A: The four most economically diverse countries in Southern Africa are highly water constrained [South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe], whereas some of the neighbouring states are water abundant [Angola, DRC, Zambia]. Water is to SADC as coal, iron ore and energy was to the creation of the European Economic Community (which later became the EU). Water cooperation in the SADC region will enable regional integration to mitigate these risks by allowing regional water, food and energy security to be guaranteed at regional rather than at national level.

By John Fraser

Credit: John Fraser/IPS
ZIMBABWE: Les chemins de fer en voie de disparition

Par Jeffrey Moyo

HARARE – Le système de transport ferroviaire du Zimbabwe peut être en voie de disparition si le gouvernement ne prend pas des mesures dras- tiques pour résoudre la série de défis opérationnels qui ont rendu les services de train de banlieue et de marchandises rares dans le pays.

"Les services ferroviaires sont certainement en crise parce qu'ils doivent continuer à payer environ 7.000 personnes - dont la plupart ont peu de chance de rapporter en réalité des recettes pour le système. Ces services constituent un fardeau pour l'économie", a déclaré à IPS, John Robertson, un éminent économiste de l'entreprise 'Robertson Economic Information Services' à Harare, la capitale du Zimbabwe.

Richard Laiton, un économiste indépendant, a ajouté qu'il y a une possibilité que cela pourrait signifier la fin du système de chemin de fer dans ce pays d'Afrique australe. "C'est regrettable que le système de transport ferroviaire devienne dormant et pasf et puisse être, pour la première fois dans l'histoire, progressivement supprimé au Zimba- bwe", a-t-il indiqué à IPS.

Selon les statistiques de la 'National Railways of Zimba- bwe' (Société nationale des chemins de fer du Zimbabwe - NRZ), juste avant 2012, il y avait quotidiennement 120.000 banlieusards qui prenaient le train à travers le pays. Ce nombre a depuis chuté de 20 pour cent, un chiffre qui, selon les responsables de la NRZ, continue de baisser.

"Nous avons l'habitude d'avoir régulièrement des trains de banlieue, mais aujourd'hui ils sont rarement disponibles et les opérateurs (de minibus taxi) nous dépouillent de banlieusards qui prenaient le train et des trains de marchandises qui empruntaient la voie d'évitement.

La NRZ a besoin d'une recapitalisation comprise entre 200 et 25 pour cent des contributions indirectes, respectivement sur le diesel et l'essence, comme un moyen de réunir l'argent pour les élections prévues au Zimbabwe vers la fin de cette année. Actuellement, un litre de carburant coûte entre 1,53 dollar pour le diesel et 1,59 dollar pour l'essence.

Localement, les minibus taxis prennent entre 0,50 dollar par voyage aller-retour de la ville, des tarifs qui doublent souvent aux heures de pointe puisque les opérateurs de taxis profitent des banlieusards désespérés qui ont peu ou pas de transport alternatif. Ce montant est élevé par rapport au prix de 0,20 dollar que les trains de banlieue prennent par voyage aller-retour de la ville.

Mais ces services des trains de banlieue sont mainten- ant rares. S'adressant à IPS sous couvert d'anonymat, des responsables de la NRZ à Harare ont déclaré que les nombreux wagons et locomotives du chemin de fer étaient maintenant en panne, entraînant la difficulté de la société à maintenir la plupart de ses travailleurs.

Des travailleurs mécontents de la NRZ manifestent sans cesse pour une augmentation des salaires et les opéra- tions sur le chemin de fer sont souvent perturbées à cause de cela. De récentes manifestations au sujet des salaires ont vu la NRZ annuller sa ligne de Bindura et Chinhoyi.

Dabuka est un train de banlieue qui a sa gare de triage à Gweru, dans le centre du Zimbabwe, et est censé être l'épicentre du réseau ferroviaire du pays, connectant les trains entre Harare et Bulawayo et reliant le pays au Mo- zambique, à l'Afrique du Sud, au Botswana et à la Namibie. Mais cette gare est maintenant déserte à cause du nombre réduit de banlieusards qui prennent le train et des trains de marchandises qui empruntent la voie d'évitement.

Robertson a déclaré qu'un financement important était nécessaire pour rétablir les services ferroviaires.

"Nous avons aussi besoin de rétablir la stabilité dans bon nombre de sections du chemin de fer après des an- nées de négligence et nous devons quasiment reconstruire les systèmes électroniques de contrôle du trafic et de sig- nalisation. La plupart des compétences techniques les plus importantes ont été perdues au cours des années de déca- lin, alors celles-ci aussi doivent être remplacées. Tout cela s'ajoute à un défi très grand et très cher", a-t-il expliqué.

Le Zimbabwe se remet toujours d'une crise économique. Entre 2003 et 2009, le pays avait l'un des pires taux d'hypermé clientisation au monde et son inflation d'année en an- née a été rapportée comme étant 231 pour cent. Les prix des produits doublaient dans le pays tous les jours et la Banque centrale du Zimbabwe a été contrainte d'émettre un billet de 100 millions de dollars zimbabwéens.

Kipson Gundani, un économiste à la Chambre nationale du commerce du Zimbabwe, a déclaré à IPS que la NRZ, appartenant à l'Etat, devrait être autorisée à opérer sur une base commerciale.

"La NRZ a souffert à cause d'une décennie de crise économique et n’a pas une intention lucrative, entraînant l'indexation des tarifs qui ne sont pas axés sur la rentabilité", a indiqué Gundani.

Prosper Chitambara, un économiste du développement à l'Institut de recherche sur le travail et le développement économique du Zimbabwe, a déclaré à IPS que la NRZ avait besoin d’une recapitalisation pour être sauvée, mais le gouvernement a indiqué qu'il n'avait pas de fonds.

La NRZ a besoin d’une recapitalisation comprise entre 300 et 400 millions de dollars pour l’amélioration et la réhabilitation des infrastructures, mais cette année, le gouvernement ne lui a alloué que 7,4 millions de dollars. Bilil avait affirmé que la réhabilitation et l’entretien des infrastructures de la NRZ dépassaient les capacités budgétaires du gouvernement.

Les opérateurs économiques ont dit qu'ils ont été égale- ment touchés par la diminution des services de transport ferroviaire.

"Les affaires étaient habituellement plus viables pour moi à l’époque où j'avais l'habitude de transporter mes peaux pour les revendre en utilisant les trains de marchandises depuis l'Afrique du Sud, mais aujourd'hui, je dois débourser plus d’argent pour louer de gros camions parce que les trains de marchandises ne sont plus fiables", a indiqué à IPS, Brighton Mugadzi, un homme d'affaires local.
Africa’s Largest Hydroelectric Project May Hit the Rocks

By John Fraser and Maurice Wa ku Demba

JOHANNESBURG / LUBUMBASHI - There are big aspirations for Africa’s largest hydroelectric project, Inga III in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but analysts are skeptical that such an ambitious project will ever be realised.

On May 19, Congolese Minister of Energy Bruno Kapandji made the announcement that the project was moving forward in the DRC capital Kinshasa. He stated that Inga III would generate 4,800 megawatts (MW). The project will be constructed on the site of two existing dams on the lower Congo River in western DRC.

South Africa is both a partner in and the major client of the project.

Independent economist Ian Cruickshanks praised the vision behind Inga III, but expressed concerns about it ever happening.

“The potential of this project is enormous and exciting and could make a huge difference to sub-Saharan Africa,” he told TerraViva.

“It could provide cheaper and cleaner electricity than is currently produced in coal-fired power stations. The river is there – you need to put in the turbines and to build the power lines.”

Inga III will require 12 billion dollars, with dam construction costs estimated at 8.5 billion dollars of the total. The full project will take six years to complete.

As a first step, the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) will approve a 63 million dollar technical assistance package to prepare the project. According to the World Bank information sheets on the project, 43 million dollars will come from its concessionary funding arm, the International Development Association, and 20 million dollars will come from the AfDB. Cruickshanks calculated that with a capacity of 40,000 MW of electricity, it would be equivalent to the entire current output of South Africa’s electricity utility Eskom.

“My one concern follows experience of the Cahora Bassa Dam project on the Zambezi river in Mozambique, which generates electricity, but the transmission to customers in South Africa isn’t efficient,” he warned.

“It is a challenge to transport electricity over a long distance. Then there is a huge security problem with giant power lines across the DRC, which is at war.”

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the security situation in eastern DRC has been precarious since July 2011.

Fresh fighting between M23, an armed group started by former Tutsi soldiers who mutinied in April 2012, the DRC army, and other local armed groups, has uprooted thousands more. Some 2.2 million people were displaced internally.

Independent engineer and commentator on energy issues Andrew Kenny told TerraViva that regional projects are essential for developing Africa’s electricity supply, which are essential for development.

“Transmission lines linking different countries are vitally necessary. Since actual demand in most African countries is so small, many generating projects will provide more power than the whole country needs, and the excess should be passed on the neighbours in need,” he argued.

“Grand Inga is only possible if it is a regional project providing power to many other countries. Similarly with a large coal station that Botswana was considering.”

However, he warned that a large scheme at Inga would require multi-billion dollar funding.

He echoed Ian Cruickshanks when he said: “At the moment investors would fear political and commercial risk from an unstable government in a country wracked with bloody conflict.

“There would also be risks in payments for the electricity, operation and maintenance of the hydro plants, sabotage, confiscation, nationalisation and inability to repay debt.

“They would also fear risk from surrounding countries owning transmission lines: risks of confiscation, imposition of very high tariffs and incompetent maintenance.”

Senior research and strategy analyst at Frontier Advisory Simon Schaefer told TerraViva that he shares concerns that such an ambitious project is possible in a troubled part of Africa.

“I think the Inga III project has to be seen in the greater context of the political situation of the country and the region,” he said. “The DRC is internally very fragmented. It is questionable whether the government in Kinshasa actually exercises effective control/power of all parts of the country.

“The political situation in the DRC is instable and the country has often been described as a failed State. Other major problems in the DRC are rampant corruption and the lack of credible institutions. All these factors are not the ideal starting point for multi-billion dollar project with a long investment horizon.”

He also noted that the project has been on the cards for many years, but he suggested that the size of the project and the complex political and security situation in the DRC may be the generation of revenues and job creation in the DRC.

“Political and economic integration in the DRC and the region are key obstacles for the implementation of the project.”

However, he did emphasise the benefits of collaboration between African nations in tackling power challenges – an issue which was highlighted by U.S. President Barak Obama on his recent trip to Africa, when he pledged billions of dollars in U.S. funding to support energy infrastructure in Africa.

“I think African countries are well advised to tackle power deficits by developing cross-board projects and to focus on integrated transmission networks across multiple countries,” Schaefer told TerraViva.

“This would allow countries to share the financial burden of the project and ensure absorption of the generated electricity. South Africa’s commitment to purchase a set amount of electricity from the DRC is a first step to increased integration in the power sector. While the key objective of the DRC may be the generation of revenues and job creation from the construction of the dam, the country has to be realistic about the off-take of power by countries in the region.”
Malawi’s women, who have been sexually assaulted or fallen victim to human trafficking, continue to face serious challenges as they navigate the country’s criminal laws and law enforcement policies because statutes here do not recognise their predicament as offences.

According to the Southern African Development Community Gender Protocol 2013 Barometer, progress on passing human trafficking and sexual harassment legislation has been slow. The barometer is an independent civil society initiative that draws on country reports by researchers and experts from each SADC member country and is meant to track achievements or setbacks in implementing the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

“Only 10 SADC countries have human trafficking laws and eight have sexual harassment legislation. There is still widespread resistance to recognising sexual harassment as a crime,” research states. This is despite the ratification of the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development by the member states.

Malawi statutes do not recognise sexual assault and human trafficking, a development that has seen courts either passing lenient sentences or acquitting perpetrators.

“The SADC Gender protocol will be difficult to implement if Malawi’s laws are not in tandem with it,” Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC) national coordinator Baldwin Chiyanwakwa told TerraViva.

Chiyanwakwa said in the absence of compatible laws courts have a tough time prosecuting offenders.

Malawi President Joyce Banda formally launched the Barometer on Thursday, Aug. 15, on the eve of the Heads of State Summit in the capital city Lilongwe.

Action Aid Women’s coordinator Wezi Moyo told TerraViva that Malawi must build on the gains made in the gender sector by taking advantage of the growing appointment of women in decision-making positions to push for laws that protect them from gender-based violence, sexual assault and human trafficking.

“In the end it’s a collaborative effort because we need men to join in this fight as well,” Moyo said.

However, Gender Links executive director Colleen Lowe Morna, said that since her alliance started tracking the presence of women in key decision-making position, statistics have not been impressive.

Morna told TerraViva that there is need to push for more female representation, both at national and local levels, arguing that results from the last set of elections in SADC were disappointing.

“The overall percentage of women MPs in the region initially stood at 21 percent rose to 24 then 25 and now is back at 24 percent. Cabinet appointments for women have also regressed,” she noted.

Morna said that apart from other gains, the 2013 Barometer carries good news on HIV for the first time. “AIDS-related deaths in the region have reduced by 32 percent since 2001 due to the expansion of the anti-retroviral therapy. In seven SADC countries Preventing Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes have a reach of over 80 percent,” she said.
Cross border traders in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have appealed to governments in the region to put an end to corruption at border posts, which they say has increased the cost of doing business. In an interview on the sidelines of the SADC Civil Society Council Forum, Patricia Chisi, the Cross Border Traders Association Treasurer, complained of harassment and intimidation by public officials, whom she accused of preying on traders’ ignorance to demand bribes.

“Corruption and harassment at the borders, is a big challenge,” Chisi told Terraviva.

“Most of the time officers intimidate cross border traders and prey on their lack of knowledge regarding tax laws to solicit bribes. Sometimes they deliberately overcharge tax and demand a payment in order to reduce the amount.”

Chisi claims that sometimes traders are searched at roadblocks and made to pay a second time for goods that they have already paid for. “This happens at most border posts because traders are not clued up on the documents that the revenue authorities require,” she said. “It is our wish as an association that all borders are set up with information desks to help traders with tax information.” Chisi also raised concerns about the lack of women-friendly facilities at border posts.

“Women need comfort, they don’t need to sleep out in the open,” she said. “We want to engage (Malawian President) Joyce Banda, who is taking over as chairperson of SADC, so that she can engage other countries to address the challenges that women traders are facing.”

According to African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) executive director Dr Collins Magalasi, a lack of coordination and fear of the unknown is fuelling corruption.

“Cross border traders are always forced to pay their way, making it very expensive to run their businesses,” Magalasi said.

According to Magalasi, every dollar that a cross border trader invests has the potential to generate a triple return, but sadly instead 80 percent of every dollar invested is lost through corruption.

“The trader is left with a very thin net profit margin. If governments do something about corruption at border posts the cost of doing business in the region will drop.”

**La Société civile contribue à la paix en RD-Congo**

**Par Adelard Obut’Okwas**

La société civile de la sous-région de la SADC apporte sa contribution à la recherche de la paix en République démocratique du Congo. Un rapport du Conseil des organisations non gouvernementales de la SADC (SADC-CNGO), présenté au cours du 9ème Forum qui se tenait en marge du sommet de la SADC à Lilongwe, au Malawi, du 12 au 18 août, a fait état des efforts de médiation consentis par la société civile dans les différents conflits en RDC.


Face à l’échec du schéma militaire et de l’accord de Lusaka, censé mettre fin à la guerre entre Laurent-Désiré Kabila et les rebelles du RCD (Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie et du MLC (Mouvement de libération du Congo), les organisations de la société civile, et notamment les églises, ont mené une vaste campagne de lobbying qui a permis de nouer le dialogue et de mettre en place l’accord global et inclusif, signé en 2002 en Afrique du Sud. Paradoxalement, la présentation de ce rapport s’est faite en l’absence des représentants de la société civile congolaise.