

Expropriation of Rural Communities in Mozambique. International Agribusiness and the Struggle for Control of Land and Water

Mozambique's Council of Ministers must say 'no' to resettlement of 100,000 in the Nacala Corridor

By [Grain](#)

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More than half a million people living in communities along the banks of the Lúrio River in northern Mozambique will be severely affected if the country's Council of Ministers approves the Lúrio River Valley Development Project (DVRL) in the controversial [Nacala Corridor](#).



Photo: ADECRU

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Of these 500,000 people, more than 100,000 in the provinces of Niassa, Nampula and Cabo Delgado will lose their homes and land. At issue is a project that was secretly presented to a small group in a hotel in Maputo in January 2014, at a meeting of representatives of government, international development agencies and the private sector, specifically domestic and foreign companies.

The project falls within a framework of rapid transformation and conversion of the Nacala Corridor, at the epicentre of a struggle for control of land and water by large international corporations, including international cooperation agencies, in the service of their countries of origin. The Mozambican government is increasingly intensifying its efforts to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and establish so-called public-private partnerships as part of its strategy to promote large-scale agriculture in an area already affected by [ProSavana, the controversial tripartite programme](#). ADECRU (Academic Action for the Development of Rural Communities) and GRAIN have found out, through reliable sources whose identities are omitted here for security reasons, that the Lúrio River Valley Development Project was submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MASA) and is now before the Council of Ministers for approval, as required by law for investments of this magnitude. The project has a budget of 4.2 billion U.S. Dollars for agricultural development and the construction of hydro-electric infrastructure on the Lúrio River.

The project will occupy an area of more than 240 thousand hectares to produce agricultural commodities for export, such as cotton, corn, sugar and ethanol, as well as livestock farming. It also provides for the construction of two dams on the Lúrio River, which will have a generating capacity of 40 MW and 15 MW of electricity respectively, as well as sustain an

irrigation system. Article 22 of the Land Act confers the power to grant areas greater than 10,000 hectares on the Council of Ministers, provided that local land use is taken into account. The same law requires the input of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security for a grant on this scale¹. In practice, these powers have been abused, resulting in the approval of projects with severe impacts on the lives of thousands of Mozambicans.

ADECRU and GRAIN have ascertained that the Lúrio River Valley Development Project will be implemented by a company that has already been created, the Companhia do Vale do Rio Lúrio (CVRL) managed by a consortium made up of TurConsult and Agricane. The shareholder structure behind the company remains unknown, shrouded in a high level of secrecy. However, it is known that TurConsult provides services to the hotel and tourism industry and is managed by Rui Monteiro, a very influential figure in that sector. Agricane is a South African company that produces sugarcane and provides consulting services to large-scale farmers in Africa, specifically in the sugar industry. ADECRU requested an interview with TurConsult, but got no response up to the time of the completion of this article.

ADECRU's Cooperative-Political and Executive Council visited the Lúrio River valley on the 2nd and 3rd of May 2015, holding talks with communities in the districts of Chiuri in Cabo Delgado Province, and Malema and Erati in Nampula Province. They found that the people were unaware of the Lúrio River Valley Development Project. Members and leaders of the communities of Cathai, Munhacuco, Nhequedza, Niveta and Namapa told ADECRU that they had never heard of the project in question.

Based on the principles of citizens' democratic participation in public life and the duty to openly publish available information of public interest, as guaranteed by Law No. 34/2014, of December 31, better known as the Right to Information Act, ADECRU asked the Council of Ministers for a copy of the project documents for the DVRL and related documentation concerning the Environmental Impact Assessment Study. Up to the time of publication, ADECRU had not received any response.

The image below was taken from the January 2014 presentation of the DVRL and shows the areas that will be affected by the implementation of large-scale agricultural projects for export and animal husbandry.



ADECRU and GRAIN transposed the project map onto a satellite image of the area. The map, available [here](#), illustrates how the area affected by the project is densely populated by small farmers and rural communities. None of these communities were consulted or informed about the project.

Preliminary data analysed by ADECRU indicate that more than 500 thousand people will be affected by the project, both downstream and upstream. Of these, more than 100 thousand will be displaced from their land to make way for large-scale agriculture developments on an area of about 240 thousand hectares.

ADECRU and GRAIN hereby publicly denounce and repudiate the Lúrio River Valley Development Project and express their concern and indignation about it. We are firmly against its approval under the terms and assumptions that led to its creation and have allowed it to be gradually put into motion. We therefore demand that Mozambique's Council of Ministers vote against the project because of the destructive impact that it will have on biodiversity the lives of more than 500 thousand people.

The Lúrio River is the second largest in Mozambique after the Zambezi River. It has a basin estimated at 60,800 km² and an average annual flow of 227 cubic meters per second, covering a distance of about 500 kilometres. The Lúrio River Valley Development Project will be implemented across the districts bordering the Lúrio River including: Lalaua, Malema, Mecuburi, Erati and Ribáuè in Nampula Province; Namuno and Chiuri in Cabo Delgado Province; and Metarica and Nipepe in Niassa Province.

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Notes:

1 The relevant clause is subparagraph a) of paragraph 3 of Article 22 of the Land Act (Law No. 19/97 of 1 October); the required input from the Minister is defined in subparagraph c) of paragraph 2.

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