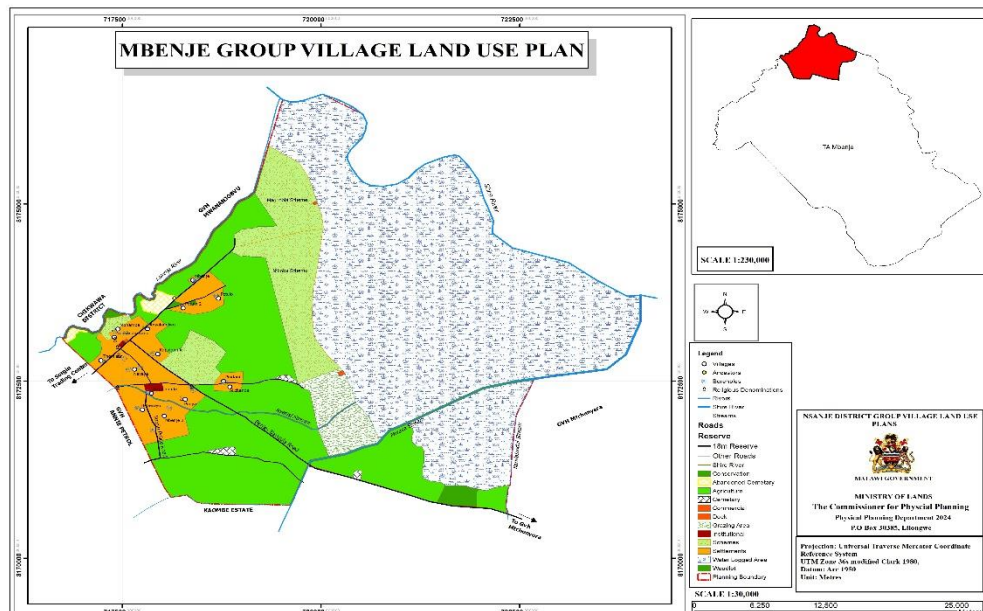




**SEPTEMBER 2024**

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## FOREWORD

Mbenje Village Land Use Plan is a reflection of the will of the people under Group Village Mbenje. The plan was prepared using a bottom up-approach and the process was guided by existing policies, legislations and regulations. It has been prepared as part of the Shire Valley Transformation Project which is focusing on making available land for irrigation among other Nsanje District projects and developments setup.

The main objective of Mbenje Village Land Use Plan is to provide a spatial framework for the sustainable development and utilization of land and land-based resources. Among others, the plan has been guided by the Physical Planning Act (2016) which mandates the planning team to engage beneficiary communities in defining the boundary of their GVH area and solicit their aspirations on how they want their areas to be developed. Therefore, the plan has been prepared through a participatory approach where the beneficiary communities are the main actors. Group Village Mbenje is located in Traditional Authority Mbenje, within Nsanje District. The general landscape of Group Village Mbenje is generally flat and it is characterized by thickets of jacaranda trees, degraded grasses, cropland and seasonal streams that form as a result of flood waters.

Assessment of the socio-economic situation of Group Village Mbenje shows that the area lacks a number of services and facilities, notable being lack of reliable health facility, inadequate boreholes, lack of bridges and curvets on the main access roads and droughts. As an agricultural community, the absence of reliable markets has also greatly affected the general livelihoods of people in Group Village Mbenje.

People's aspirations were acquired through the Customary Land Committees, Village Development Committee and the village leadership and this is reflected in the provisions of the plan. Mbenje Village Land Use Plan has made provisions for the following major land uses; agriculture, settlements and forestry with agriculture as a dominant land use. In compliance with the aspirations of the people of Mbenje, the plan has also proposed the following; modern children-based care center, a good community ground, a dip tank and a network tower. The plan also recommends the construction of additional school blocks and staff houses at Lalanje Primary School.

Mbenje Village Land Use Plan will be implemented by several stakeholders through Nsanje District Council but the Customary Land Committee in liaison with the Village Development Committee will play a key role in ensuring that its provisions are complied with. It will also be monitored bi-annually, but shall be reviewed once every five years. Mbenje Village Land Use Plan will be implemented through an integrated approach as the area is part of an impact area of the Shire Valley Transformation Project and its successful implementation hinges on collaboration of all stakeholders from national level to local level.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department of Physical Planning would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to the entire Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development for the technical and logistical support rendered throughout the process of preparing this plan. The planning team also appreciates the role played by Shire Valley Transformation Project for the financial support. The Nsanje District Council needs to be commended for its efforts in linking the planning team with respective communities.

Furthermore, the team is indebted to various stakeholders at local level for their valuable contributions and co-operation during the preparation of this plan. Particularly, the team wishes to express great appreciation to Traditional Authority Mbenje, Group Village Head Mbenje, the Customary Land Committee, the Village Development Committee, and the entire Mbenje Community.

Prior to the endorsement of the Mbenje Village Land Use Plan by the Nanje District Council, contributions by DEC and Council were incorporated into the plan. The Planning Team hopes and believes that the community in Group Village Mbenje will offer its support and cooperate during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this plan. Special recognition should also go to every member of the Planning Team both in the field and at the office for the various roles they played at every stage of plan preparation.

## ACRONYMS

|        |                                                    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------|
| ADC    | Area Development Committee                         |
| ADMARC | Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation |
| CBCC   | Community Based Care Centres                       |
| CLA    | Customary Land Act                                 |
| CLC    | Customary Land Committee                           |
| DEC    | District Executive Committee                       |
| GVA    | Group Village Area                                 |
| GVH    | Group Village Headperson                           |
| NEEF   | National Economic Empowerment Fund                 |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organization                      |
| NLP    | National Land Policy                               |
| PPA    | Physical Planning Act                              |
| SVTP   | Shire Valley Transformation Project                |
| VDC    | Village Development Committee                      |
| VDRMC  | Village Disaster Risk Management Committee         |
| VNRMC  | Village Natural Resources Management Committee     |



# **1 BACKGROUND**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Land-use planning is the systematic assessment of land and water potential, alternatives for land use and economic and social conditions in order to select and adopt the best land-use options. Its purpose is to select and put into practice those land uses that will best meet the needs of the people while safeguarding resources for the future. Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) is essentially a bottom-up land use planning, carried out with active participation of the concerned community (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2014). The role of physical planning experts was to bring together the aspirations of the people, synthesize them and plan according to the existing standards of the services and facilities as demanded.

## **1.2 Planning Goal and Objectives**

The main goal of Mbenje Village Land Use Plan is to provide a spatial framework for the sustainable development and utilization of land and land-based resources. Specifically, the plan aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify land for irrigation purposes in order to boost agricultural production.
- To promote optimum and sustainable use of water, land and land based natural resources.
- To improve infrastructures and socio-economic services for the villages within the Shire Valley Transformation Project 1.
- To facilitate the implementation of land related laws and regulations.
- To assist in resolving land use conflicts and disputes among land users.
- To ensure and empower the participation of communities and other stakeholders in the preparation of Land Use Plan.
- To promote resilience and mitigate the impacts of natural disasters

## **1.3 Planning Principles and Approach**

The planning process in all the villages in the Shire Valley Transformation Project Area adopted the basic principle of participatory planning. This is so because participatory land use planning provides an opportunity for local land users to play a central role in decision-making processes concerning the land and resources upon which they depend.

Basically, the approach to the planning exercise involved preparation, discussion and adoption of data collection guide (questionnaire); and sensitization of concerned Traditional Authorities and Group Village Heads. Socio-economic information was collected through structured questionnaires and focus group discussions and observations. In addition, perimeter boundary identification was also done for the group village area while at the same time picking boundaries of various land uses such as settlements, forestry, cemetery and farming area. All the activities were done with community representatives.

#### **1.4 Legal and Policy Framework**

The Physical Planning Act 2016 is the principal legal instrument governing physical planning in Malawi. The main objective of the Act is to provide for orderly and progressive development of land in both urban and rural areas in order to guide and facilitate the country's social and economic development. This is in line with one of the prime objectives of the National Land Policy (NLP) of extending land use planning and development controls to all types of land, in effect, making the whole country a planning area. The NLP also provides guidelines for village land use planning. Among other things, the guidelines stipulate that 'land use planning should be done as a dual process in which the community participates fully by offering local knowledge of their environment and existing land use patterns.'

Section 42 of the Physical Planning Act, 2016 gives power to the Commissioner for Physical Planning to prepare land use plans within an area under the jurisdiction of the local government authority. Therefore, the village land use plan for Mbenje was prepared by the Department of Physical Planning on behalf of Nsanje District Council under powers conferred on the Commissioner for Physical Planning under the aforementioned section of the Act.

The Physical Planning Act also provides for public participation at all levels of planning in the country. Specifically, Section 23 (4) of the PPA gives freedom to the responsible authority to hold meetings with any persons or organizations for the purpose of explaining the proposed plan and receiving representations and comments thereon. In order to be in line with the provisions of the PPA and the NLP guidelines for village land use planning, the planning approach adopted in the preparation of Mbenje Group Land Use Plan was fully participatory.

Section 43 (1) of the PPA recognizes the mandate of the Customary Land Committee provided for under Section 6 of the Customary Land Act (CLA), 2016 relating to authorization of use and occupation of customary land within its area of jurisdiction. Customary Land Committees which are established at group village level, whose secretary is the land clerk, form part of the village development committee.

Section 6 (2) of the CLA provides that in the management of customary land. A customary land committee shall have the responsibility to plan for sustainable development within the area. In addition, Section 8 (3) (d) of the CLA stipulate that the land clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of land use plans in accordance with the PPA, 2016.

Section 43 (2) (d) of the PPA makes provision for the preparation of a simple layout plan for a 'Village' for use by a Traditional Authority and customary land committees in the authorization of use and occupation of customary land. It is therefore noteworthy that the term 'village' in both the PPA and CLA should be understood to be group village and this serves as the lowest planning unit. The Mbenje Group Village Land Use

Plan was prepared within the spatial framework of the Nsanje District Physical Development Plan. Other laws which are critical for the preparation and implementation of the Mbenje Group Land Use Plan include the following: The Land (Amendment) Act, 2016, the Land Survey Act, 2016, the Forestry (Amendment) Act, 2016, the Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2016 and the Environmental Management Act.

Additionally, the Draft Land Use Policy acknowledges that the public has the right to demand and participate in decision making at all stages of land use planning and management. Experience has shown that plan implementation is easier where this basic right is respected because the public fully owns the plan. In the light of the above, the policy aims to promote participatory and community driven planning to ensure ownership and effective implementation of plans by all stakeholders and the public. Similarly, Land Use Planning and Management Guidelines and Standards stipulate that planning and implementation processes must ensure public participation at all times.

## **2 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF PHYSICAL FEATURES**

### **2.1 Location**

Mbenje Group Village Area is located on the northern part of Traditional Authority Mbenje which is on the boundary with Chikwawa District. It has made boundary with Chikwawa District by Lalanje River to the north, GVH Ntchenyera to the south, Shire River to the East forming Malawi boundary with Mozambique and GVH Annie Petulo to the West. The area is comprised of 16 villages namely: Alichande, Pindani, Mponya, Bulawayo, Mphetomwanyama, Kapalamula, Mbenje 1 and 2, Petulo 1 and 2, Anyalandiwo, Ndakanamwano, Mphamba, Thamison, Navaya and Chambuluka.

### **2.2 General Landscape**

GVH Mbenje area is generally flat. It is characterised by both artificial and indigenous trees. Trees are common around the village and in the homestead and mostly common are thickets of jacaranda trees. Cropland also covers a big part of the village with only 2 rivers namely Lalanje and Mwetsa, passing on the eastern and western boundary of the village.

### **2.3 Soils**

Common soils in the area are makande soils mostly found on southern part of the area, sandy loam type of soils in the northern area of the GVH and salt soils mostly along Shire River on the eastern part. Makande is suitable for growing vegetables, beans, maize and rice. Rice, beans, sweet potatoes, mapira and nchewere are grown in sandy type of soils.

### **2.4 Forests and Conservations**

The area has 2 community woodlots and 1 school woodlot at Lalanje Primary School however, there is no natural forest. The woodlots cover an area of about 3.58ha. However, the area is also covered with thickets of jacaranda trees both in the settlement and agriculture areas. Additionally, much of the land in the area is covered by water logged area and it covers 2100.885479ha.

The woodlots were planted and are being maintained with support from Food for Work program and looked after by Village Natural Resources Management Committee (VNRMC) whose main function is to enhance conservation in the area. Most common trees in the woodlots are acacia and neem. Common trees in the homesteads include Acacia, Mtondo, Baobab, Phakasa, Mvunguti, Njale, Mgoza and Jacaranda. Jacaranda is the most common tree in the area. Rabbits, monkeys, birds, Kamwiri, Antelopes and m are the most common animals inhabiting these forests. The community rely on jacaranda for firewood and charcoal, Mtondo trees for shelter. The trees from the woodlots are also used for community projects like burning of bricks for school building school blocks projects, Shelters, as well as for toilets by the villagers. The trees also play a crucial role in protecting households in the from strong winds

## **2.5 Disaster Occurrences**

GVH Mbenje area, like many of the areas in Lower Shire is mostly affected by river floods. The areas mostly affected by flooding include Bulawayo village in the east affected by Kandalandala, Shire and Mwetsa Rivers. Mphamba village is mostly affected by Lalanje River and community indicates the situation has been made worse by construction of a dyke on the Chikwawa District side of Lalanje River. Other natural disasters that affect the area include droughts and strong winds. Drought is usually caused by persistent dry spells as rain in the Shire Valley area falls minimally. rainfall accompanied with heavy winds also cause devastating damage to the settlement areas.

Mbenje Village Disaster Risk Management Committee (VDRMC) is in charge of managing disasters in the area. It alerts people on impending disasters as well as organise where people should evacuate to when flooding occurs. Some mechanisms used to alert people include ng'oma (drums), which they beat loudly, and also by use of a megaphone. The community has lost properties and crops through disasters, mostly from flooding. In addition, 2 villages have been undergone resettlement due to severe flooding and these are Bulawayo and Mbenje 1. The area does not have an evacuation centre, and relies on Lalanje Primary School and church premises when disasters strike.

### 3 EXISTING SOCIAL ECONOMIC SITUATIONS

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

This section analyses the livelihood and social economic situation of the people of GVH Mbenje and how it affects the people in the area.

#### 3.1.2 Population

According to Mbenje Village Development Committee (VDC), GVH Mbenje has a total population of 4,235, translating to 963 households<sup>1</sup>. The population can be projected to the plan's implementation period of 10 years using annual population growth rate of 2.1% established in Chikwawa District Development Plan, 2019. Using population growth rate of 2.1%, by year 2033, the population in GVH Mbenje is estimated to grow to 5,106 people. Using the average of 4.4 members per household, household population can be estimated from the projected population. Hence, in the tenth-year household population will be about 1,161.

The population growth is greatly contributed by early marriages and high number of children per family. This has put pressure on the availability of land knowing also that much land has been lost to flooding. This also is putting pressure on available public services such as schools and health centres, as with current services deemed to be inadequate. Hence, population growth has adversely affected the community.

#### 3.1.3 Social Economics / Livelihood

GVH Mbenje community relies on agriculture as their main source of livelihood. The community mainly relies heavily on growing and selling vegetables as their source of livelihood. Most grown vegetables include therere, onions and tomatoes. Other cash crops grown in the area include cotton, beans, chitowe, groundnuts and nseula. Subsistence, the also grow maize, groundnuts, beans, millet, chitowe, sweet potatoes, nchewere and sugarcane. Mostly reared livestock include chicken, ducks, goats, sheep, cattle, guinea fowl, rabbits and pigeons. Goats, sheep and cattle are mostly reared for sale while poultry and rabbits are reared for both sale and food.

The community also relies on small scale businesses as their source of livelihood. Commonly found businesses include small groceries, benches, shoe repairers, bicycle repairers, bakeries, vegetable markets, and barber shops. A summary of these economic activities is shown in **Table 1**. Other small-scale businesses include buying and selling fish, vegetables and also processing and selling charcoal. Some of the shops and businesses are operated in residential houses not which are not ideal for commercial activities.

The area has a small market built by Church Action Relief and Development Alliance (CARD) through Methodist Church. It is just a village market with a small structure and few shops; however, the community aspires for it to grow and be able to carter for the

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<sup>1</sup> NSO (2018) indicates that average household size is 4.4 members in Malawi

needs of the GVH area. The area relies on Sorgin Trading Centre which is at a distance of about 5 km for other services such as welding which require electricity as the area is not yet connected to the ESCOM grid. The community also relies on casual labour like piece works, mostly in the farms of well to do fellow Kinsmen.



**Figure 1:** Market Shelter in GVH Mbenje (Source: Department of Physical Planning, 2024)

People in the area are also engaged in fishing activities in the Shire River. There are 2 docks in the area namely Pindani, Bulawayo and Phetomwanyama village where these fishing activities are carried. Fishermen catch and sell fresh fish to people on wholesale who then either process or sale the fresh at their village market or Sorgin and Bangula trading centres. **Table 2** shows commercial activities common in GVH Mbenje area.

**Table 1:** Common Commercial Activities in Mbenje GVH

| NO | Activities/Services | Number            |
|----|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1  | Maize mills         | 1 (run on diesel) |
| 2  | Shops               | 9                 |
| 3  | Bicycle repair      | 1                 |
| 4  | Carpenter           | 8                 |
| 5  | Bakery              | 10                |

|   |              |   |
|---|--------------|---|
| 6 | Butchery     | 2 |
| 7 | Benches      | 4 |
| 8 | Shoe repairs | 3 |
| 9 | Barbershops  | 2 |

**Source:** Department of Physical Planning (2024)

### 3.1.4 Financial Services

The community of GVH Mbenje do not have any access to any financial services. They used to rely on National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF) loans but currently the opportunities have seized. Some members of the community are engaged in village savings loan groups, locally known as bank m'nhonde, contributing money for a particular period of time before sharing dividends. Hence, people join bank m'nhonde to access money which they can use for businesses and other financial needs as well as an easy way for saving money.

### 3.1.5 Land Availability

GVH Mbenje has total land area of about 2360.022756ha. This is under different land uses amongst which the major ones include agriculture (619.058912ha), residential (181.194256ha), irrigation schemes (228.74ha), grazing area (67.98478694ha) and water-logged area (1238.25128ha). Table 2 and map below show different land uses in the area of GVH Mbenje.

**Table 2:** Summary of Existing Land Uses

| ITEM NO. | LAND USE                        | EXISTING LAND USES (HA) |
|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1        | Housing and General Settlements | 181.194256              |
| 2        | Agriculture/Farming             | 619.058912              |
| 3        | Institutional                   | 2.321033                |
| 4        | Woodlot (within settlement)     | 3.576916                |
| 5        | Cemetery                        | 17.753112               |
| 6        | Commercial                      | 0.535215                |
| 7        | Water logged area               | 1238.25128              |
| 8        | Irrigation Scheme               | 228.741827              |
| 9        | Dock                            | 0.605418                |
| 10       | Conservation                    | 0                       |
| 11       | Grazing area                    | 67.98478694             |
| 12       | <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>2360.022756</b>      |

**Source:** Department of Physical Planning (2024)





## 3.2 Existing Infrastructures

### 3.2.1 Introduction

This section analyses the existing infrastructures' in GVH Mbenje area together with their main challenges. This section will look at housing, settlements, community services, health, education and utilities.

### 3.2.2 Housing and Settlements

Settlement patterns in GVH Mbenje are mostly linear where they follow linear features such as the main roads. It can be observed that most settlements follow the Sorgin – Mbenje road. It is also mixed with nucleated type of settlements where houses are compacted together at one place. The main reason for the location of Mbenje community is to get close to their farm lands and schemes which are along the Shire River. The area is characterised mostly by traditional houses made of bricks and thatched with grasses. A few of the houses are of semi-permanent type of house where they are made of both temporary and permanent materials apart from few institutional buildings such as schools and churches which are of permanent in nature. The area has 181.194256Ha of land for housing and settlement.

It can, therefore, be analysed if the settlement land is enough for the current population in the area. If every household is given a land area of 0.045 hectares (15m by 30m plot which is a minimum size of a plot at a village level), a rough estimate of the total required land area for housing can be calculated as follows:

Settlement land = Land area per household x the number of households in a given time

$$= 0.045 \times 963$$

$$= 43.335$$

In this case 963 households require 43.335ha of land for settlement. This means currently there is enough land for settlement (Refer **Table 2**). In the next 10 years the household population will increase from 963 to 1,161. These households will require about 52.245ha. This means that in the next 10 year's current settlement land which is 181.194256ha will be enough.

However, due to flooding most of the land is becoming unusable for settlement purpose. As such most of the villages have been resettled due to their area being frequently affected by floods and becoming water logged. Red Cross Society with funding from Kuwait Red Crescent Society built houses to aid resettlement of the affected families (Refer **Figure 3**). There also seems to be no proper zoning as it was observed that a market place is mixed up with other conflicting uses, such as bottle stores. Lastly, the settlement areas are developed anyhow with no proper planning with

most houses not having direct access to roads. Unplanned house development is also leaving spaces between, hence land is not being used efficiently.



**Figure 3:** A House for Flood Victims Built by Red Cross Society (Source: Department of Physical Planning, 2024)

### **3.2.3 Education**

The area has only one primary school namely Lalanje Full Primary School. The area does not have a secondary school, it relies on Sorgin Community Day Secondary School in GVH Sorgin which is at a distance of about 4km. The area does not have any community college. They also access tertiary education at Tengani Technical College in Tengani, Nsanje.

#### ***3.2.3.1 Lalanje Full Primary School***

Lalanje Full Primary School is located in Kapalamula Village. The school's catchment area is GVH Mbenje and part of GVH Annie Petulo. The school has 12 classrooms, 13 toilets from which 7 are for boys, 5 are for girls and it has 4 toilets for school teachers. The school has 4 staff houses of which most of them are in a dilapidated state and a head master's office. The school has 11 qualified teachers from which 6 are males and 5 is are females.

**Table 3:** Enrolment at Lalanje Full Primary School

| Year      | Number of Girls | Number of Boys | Total number of Pupils | Drop Outs |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------|
| 2021-2022 | 330             | 356            | 686                    | 25        |
| 2022-2023 | 309             | 352            | 661                    | 25        |
| 2023-2024 | 334             | 312            | 646                    | 25        |

Source: Department of Physical Planning (2024)

As seen from **Table 4** above the academic year of 2023 – 2024 has a total enrolment is 646 pupils and this is versus a total of 11 teachers. This represents a teacher to pupil ration of 1:58. This shows that teachers are adequate at the school as recommended teacher to pupil ration as per education standard and guidelines is 1:60. Through the same calculations it can be determined if the classrooms are enough for the total enrolment at the school. This is a total of 16 classrooms against 661 pupils with the recommended ratio is 60 pupils per classroom. Hence it means every classroom on average holds 42 pupils, this therefore, indicates that the classrooms are adequate. As the population in the area continues to grow, however, the enrolment could also increase which could put pressure on the learning resources available.

**Table 3** above also shows a high number of pupils drop outs at the school in all academic year. According to the school's headmaster, this is so because of general poverty in the area, lack of feeding program at the school, early marriages and lack of parental guidance and participation in encouraging the children to go to school. In addition to some of the issues raised in the discussion above, the school has inadequate learning and teaching materials, there is no exchange room for girls and teachers houses are in dilapidated state.

### 3.2.4 Health

The area has 1 under-five clinic and it is located in Mphamba Village. The under-five clinic does not have any structure, for its services it uses Mphamba CBCC structures. All other health services the community accesses them at Sorgin Health Centre in GVH Sorgin which is at 4.5km, well within radius recommended by the Ministry of Health.

### 3.2.5 Community Services

#### 3.2.5.1 Cemetery

The area has 5 cemeteries situated in Thamison, Mbenje 1, Pindani and Bulawayo villages. These cemeteries cover a total of 17.753112ha of land. However, 2 of the

cemeteries, Thamison and Mbenje 1, are located along Lalanje River bank which is against planning standards and guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

Using the British standard of 1ha accommodating 1550 burial sites, it can be determined if the current cemeteries are enough for the current and future needs of the population. Therefore, the current population of 4,235 will require about 2.73ha of land for burial sites. Hence, the current cemeteries are enough for the current population. The future population of 5,106 will require about 3.29ha of cemetery for its 10-year implementation period.

#### ***3.2.5.2 Community Hall, Community Based Organizations and Playgrounds***

The GVH area does not have any community ground, the only available playground belongs to Lalanje Primary School which the community is allowed to use. However, this is not enough as it's always crowded and overused. The community have showed an interest of having a community ground in the area.

The area does not have a community hall or any Community Based Organisations. For meetings the community uses Lalanje Primary School campus or under trees for any other community meetings.

#### ***3.2.5.3 Religious Institutions***

The GVH area has about 4 churches and 1 mosque. The churches include New Vision Pentecost Church, St Peter's Catholic Church, Makombe Seventh Day Adventist Church and 10 Commandments Church. 2 of the churches are situated at the market centre and its proving to cause conflict of land uses.

#### ***3.2.5.4 Community Based Care Centres (CBCC)***

The area has 3 Community Based Care Centres in GVH Mbenje located in Mphamba, Petulo 2 and Navaya Villages. Only Mphamba CBCC has a proper structure while the rest are in dilapidated state due to flood damage and lack of maintenance. CBCC's amongst others help in academic advancement and early behaviour development of the children as well as enhancing school readiness and a smoother transition to kindergarten. Hence, good CBCC's means a good education foundation for the children in the community.

### **3.2.6 Utilities**

#### ***3.2.6.1 Water***

The main source of water for the GVH Mbenje community is boreholes. The area has 16 boreholes altogether out of which only 4 boreholes produce good water while the rest produce salty water. The area is not connected to piped water supply. Some of the

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<sup>2</sup> Planning regulations recommend that cemeteries have to be located not less than 250m from water reservoirs like rivers or boreholes.



villages travel long distances to find boreholes, for example, Mponya, Chambuluka, Phetomwanyama, Mbenje 2.



**Figure 4:** A borehole at VH Mphamba (Department of Physical Planning, 2022.)

A borehole is supposed to serve 250 people, hence, using this standard it can be determined if the number of boreholes are enough for current and the future need of the community. Therefore, current population of 4235 people requires about 17 boreholes and the projected population of 5289 will need to be supplied with about 21 boreholes. This indicates that the current number of boreholes is not enough to cater for the current and future needs of the population in its implementation period of 10-years.

#### ***3.2.6.2 Energy***

The GVH area relies on solar energy, firewood, charcoal, diesel fuel and battery cells as their sources of energy for both lighting and cooking. Solar energy is used at a smaller scale and it is mostly used for lighting, televisions, charging phones, and sound systems, as well as in businesses such as barbershops. Firewood and charcoal are used mostly for cooking while battery cells are mostly used for lighting. In the area, Jacaranda shrubs are mostly the sources of firewood. The area is not connected to ESCOM electricity, however, power lines have been installed in the area indicating that anytime electricity will be supplied to the area. As such services like maize mills are operated using diesel fuel. Other activities that require electricity like welding are accessed at Sojini trading centre which is about 4.5km away from the GVH area.

#### **3.2.7 Roads and Transportation**

The GVH area is served by 4 earth roads namely: Sorgin – Bulawayo – Bangula; Sorgin – Mbenje; and Nyambesa Irrigation Scheme – Bangula. These are earth roads

constructed from the soils around them and most were constructed through Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) or Local Development Fund (LDF). Due to makande type of soils which are dominant in the area the roads tend to be slippery and impassable during the rainy season. The roads also lack bridges and curvetts in most of the areas they intersected with rivers and streams. The area also has a network of footpaths and motor-able tracks which connects the villages in the area and also connects the village to the farms lands.

Common modes of transport are motor cycles, bicycles and walking. People use motor cycles and bicycles to get to Sorgin Trading Centre where they access most of the basic needs. For other short distances people just walk although this is slightly affected by jacaranda thorny trees which are common in the area.

### **3.2.8 Agriculture**

#### ***3.2.8.1 Rain Fed Farming***

Agriculture is the back bone of livelihood of the community of GVH Mbenje. This is shown by the total coverage of agriculture land which is about 619.058912ha. Commonly grown crops in the area are maize, groundnuts, beans, millet, chitowe, sweet potatoes, nchewere, vegetables, nseula, cotton and sugarcane. Most of these crops are grown for subsistence and only surplus are sold apart from the cash crops like cotton, beans, sugarcane, vegetables and chitowe. However, rainfed agriculture is not that productive because of persistent dry spells which makes it hard to grow crops like maize and vegetables. Hence the community relies on irrigation farming to supplement on the produce from rain fed agriculture.

Rain fed agriculture is mostly affected by persistent dry spells. It is also affected by fall armyworms which are resilient to pesticides.

#### ***3.2.8.2 Irrigation farming***

The area has 3 irrigation schemes where the community practice irrigation farming. These are Magodola, Jimba and Nyambesa irrigation schemes. These are located in the north-eastern part of the GVH area. This area has a number of tributaries of Shire River, one of them is Makombe River. This is where the community have their schemes.

Magodola and Jimba Irrigation Scheme have canals taking water from Makombe river into the schemes. The schemes are divided into parcels of land which are allocated to households to irrigate crops. The households individually use treadle pumps, water canes or solar pumps to get water from the main canals to irrigate their crops. Nyambesa Irrigation Scheme uses solar electricity to pump water from Makombe River to the scheme. However, the scheme is no longer operational as its water engine has stopped working. Common irrigated crops in these schemes include vegetables, maize, beans and sweet potatoes.

Irrigation has the potential to yield more produce but it is affected by poor irrigation equipment. It is also affected by flooding as sometimes people are unable to grow crops due to the fields being flooded by water.

#### ***3.2.8.3 Livestock Farming***

Livestock farming is crucial to the livelihood of GVH Mbenje community. Commonly reared livestock include cattle, chickens, goats, rabbits, pigs, guinea fowl and ducks. Livestock are mostly reared for sale and are mostly sold during the lean months of the year for sustenance. The area has a grazing land in the east close to Mwetsa River where livestock are grazed. The grazing land covers a total of 67.98478694ha of land.

Livestock farming in the area is mostly affected by diseases such as foot and mouth. The area is also affected by livestock theft and lack of markets for selling livestock or livestock products.



## 4 KEY ISSUES FOR THE LAND USE PLAN

### 4.1 Introduction

This section outlines the major issues and challenge which have been established from analysing the existing situations. Addressing the issues collectively will mean improving the livelihood of Mbenje community as well ensuring efficient use land resource.

### 4.2 Major Issues

Listed in **Table 4** below are the major issues and challenges faced by the community of GVH Mbenje.

**Table 4: Summary of Major Issues and Challenges**

| ITEM NO | FOCUS AREA             | CHALLENGES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | Water Supply           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Saline water</li><li>• Inadequate boreholes</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2       | Education              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate staff houses</li><li>• High rate of dropout</li><li>• Inadequate learning and teaching materials</li><li>• Absence of change room for girls</li><li>• Low community participation</li></ul>                                                                |
| 3       | Agriculture            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pest and disease e.g. foot and mouth disease etc.</li><li>• Lack of established and reliable markets for agriculture produce.</li><li>• Persistent dry spells</li><li>• Livestock theft</li><li>• Poor irrigation equipment</li><li>• Absence of a dip tank</li></ul> |
| 4       | Health                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Absence of a health centre</li><li>• Lack of structure for the under-5 clinic</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 5       | Access roads           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of bridges and curvets</li><li>• Roads usually get affected by flood during rainy season due to poor drainage.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                         |
| 6       | Sources of livelihoods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of employment opportunities</li><li>• Inadequate financial services</li><li>• Conflicted land use</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                      |
| 7       | Natural disasters      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drought</li><li>• Strong winds</li><li>• Floods</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

**Source:** Department of Physical Planning (2024)

### 4.3 Community Aspirations

Outlined below are the aspirations of Mbenje community. The community envisages that if services listed are provided, the welfare and livelihood, will improve. Some of the aspirations are responses to some of the challenges the community is facing.

- ✓ Health post
- ✓ Additional teacher's houses
- ✓ Curvets and bridges on the access roads
- ✓ Modern Child Based Care Centres
- ✓ Dip tank
- ✓ Network tower
- ✓ Community ground
- ✓ A technical college



**Figure 5:** Focus Group Discussions with Village Development Committee (Department of Physical Planning, 2024.)

## **5 PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN**

### **5.1 Introduction**

GVH Mbenje proposed land use plan has been determined by several factors that influence and affect the use of land in the area. These major factors include the following:

- The proposed SVTP irrigation canal
- Population growth
- Availability of water resources e.g., Lalanje and Shire River
- The socio-economic needs of people in the area

### **5.2 Agriculture**

#### **5.2.1 Crop agriculture**

Mbenje community has 721.58ha of land designated for agriculture use. However, the current household population of 963 requires 1,926ha and the projected household population of 1,161 will require 2,322ha of land for agriculture use (using the recommended hectare of a piece of land per household is 2ha) which shows that agriculture land is inadequate for the plan's implementation period and beyond. Therefore, the plan proposes intensification of agriculture as well as irrigation farming which the area already practices. The presence of Shire River in the area presents a continuous supply of potential irrigation water for agriculture. There are already 3 schemes in the area which if invested in can yield more agriculture produce. Hence, the plan proposes these schemes to be turned into cooperatives for irrigation at a large scale for improved agriculture produces.

The plan also proposes community-supported agriculture (CSA) which links producers and consumers. CSA members pre-pay for a share of the farm's products, giving producers market and financial certainty. In return, buyers enjoy fresh, local produce all season. This model promotes community and sustainable farming. This can work best with vegetable farming which is the most irrigated crop in the area.

Rural sustainable agriculture requires education and training. Farmers need sustainable techniques, modern technology, and market potential information. Extension agencies, agricultural cooperatives, and local NGOs can help farmers, train and assist them acquiring modern technologies for improved agriculture produce.

Finally, the plan also proposes field water management can be used to manage the rise and drainage of floodwater within a field. Dikes and soil bunds can be essential in protecting the fields from unexpected floods and they can also allow farmers to drain or retain water as needed. Therefore, the plan has reserved 602.561085ha of land for agriculture purposes.

### **5.2.2 Livestock Agriculture**

The area has favourite conditions for livestock farming as it has a grazing area as well as plenty of water for the livestock to drink on throughout the year. The plan has proposed to reserve 65.9897 as grazing land. The plan has also proposed for construction of a dip tank in the area. The area for this proposal has been reserved and it is within the institutional land which is about 2.795943ha.

### **5.3 Housing and Settlements**

The GVH Mbenje has enough settlement land for the current and future needs of the population as projected household population will only require 43.34 compared to the existing 181.922ha. Therefore the plan has reserved 165.106349ha for housing and settlement. However, the area lacks orderliness in the way houses are constructed as there is no proper planning. Hence, the plan proposes the use of simple lay out plans to guide developments in these settlement areas. It also encourages development control and upgrading of the unplanned built areas. These methods will help control developments as well as improve the existing settlements.

The plan also proposes continuous training of CLC's on their roles and responsibility on the management of customary land. This will enable the CLC's to better control development of settlement areas as well as plan how structures should be constructed.

### **5.4 Health**

The plan proposes for construction of a health post in GVH Mbenje. Land amounting to 2.795943ha has been reserved for institution purposes and it includes the proposed health post. This health centre will cater for the GVH area and part of GVH Annie Petulo.

### **5.5 Education**

The plan proposes for construction of additional staff houses as well as renovating the existing ones at Lalanje Full Primary School. The plan also proposes that the Ministry of Education in liaison with Nsanje District Council should provide additional teaching and learning materials at the school like books and desks. In addition, there is need to renovate the dilapidated classrooms in order to make them conducive learning environment. Lastly, the plan proposes and encourages the GVH, leaders and the entire community of GVH Mbenje to encourage children to go to school by abolishing early marriages as well as put stiff by-laws for punishing the parents whose children will not going to school.

### **5.6 Utilities**

#### **5.6.1 Water**

The current number of boreholes are not enough for the current and future population. The projected population of 5,106 will need to be served by at list 21 boreholes. Therefore, the plan proposes that additional 5 boreholes will need to be drilled to add

on the available 16 boreholes. The plan also recommends that priority areas for the installation of the proposed borehole should be those whose people travel long distances to access water, for example Mbenje 1, Phetomwanyama, Mponya and Chambuluka.

### **5.6.2 Energy**

Electricity power lines have already been installed in the area hence households will be connected to electricity in no time. However, the plan also encourages the community to continue relying on solar energy to make use of the hot Chikwawa weather.

## **5.7 Community Services**

### **5.7.1 Cemetery**

The plan proposes the closure of 2 cemeteries which are in Thamison and Mbenje 1 villages which covered a total area of 10.621366ha. Hence the remaining cemetery lands are covering a total of 4.57ha. Using the British standard of 1ha accommodating 1550 burial sites, in 10 years the future population will require about 3.29ha of cemetery land. Hence the remaining cemetery land is adequate for the current and the implementation period of the plan.

### **5.7.2 Community Based Care Centres (CBCC)**

The plan proposes renovation of CBCC's in Petulo 2 and Navaya villages. However, the plan proposes for construction of a modern CBCC in Mphamba village which is the most vibrant CBCC in the GVH area. The area for constructing this CBCC is included in the institutional land which is about 2.7959Ha.

### **5.7.3 Community Ground**

The plan has proposed for a construction of a community ground in the area. However, a site for this proposal has not yet been identified by the community.

## **5.8 Transportation and Roads Network**

The plan has proposed upgrading of Mbenje – Bangula and Sorgin police roads into 18m roads. The plan also proposes upgrading these in-situ roads to gravel roads to reduce slipperiness during rainy seasons. Bridges and curvets should also be constructed on these roads to improve transport communication during rainy seasons mainly on Mwetsa river connecting Mbenje and Ntchenyera GVH's and on Nyafisi Stream. Figure 5 below is a map showing the proposed road network.

## **5.9 Incidences of Disasters**

The plan proposes construction of a dyke along the Lalanje River to prevent flooding of the river to affect the villages in the area. The plan has also proposed for construction of an evacuation centre in the area and land for this proposal is included in the institutional land which is about 2.795943ha.

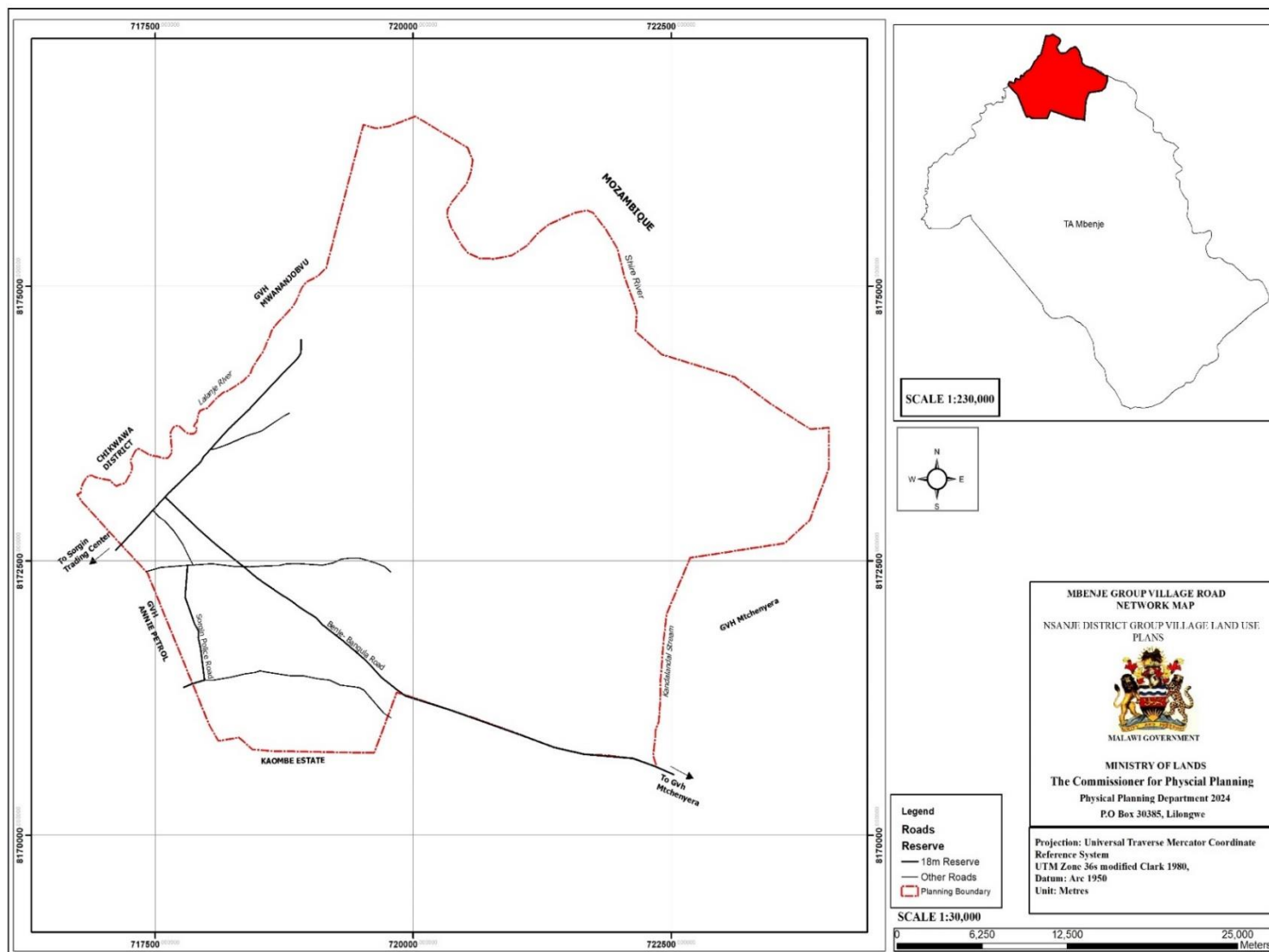


Figure 6: Proposed Road Network (Department of Physical Planning, 2024)

### 5.10 Forest and conservation

The plan has proposed to maintain 3.576916ha of land for woodlots. The plan has also proposed 40.765832ha of land to be conservation area. The conservation area includes all river banks, flood prone areas and swamps. Heavy reliant on firewood is a threat on these woodlots and conservation areas. The plan encourages the community to plant more woodlots and find alternative forms of energy to firewood and charcoal in order to save the environment.

### 5.11 Management of Population Growth

The area's population is not growing at an alarming late, however, the plan has proposed that households need to be civic educated and encouraged to manage their family sizes in order not to exert pressure on agriculture land and other community services. The table below shows the existing and proposed land uses. The plan also proposes abolition of early marriages as they are also the cause for high dropout rate at Lalanje Full Primary School.

**Table 5: Existing and Proposed Land Uses**

| ITEM NO. | LAND USE                        | EXISTING LAND USES (HA) | PROPOSED LAND USE (HA) | INCREASE (HA)    | DECREASE (HA)     |
|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1        | Housing and General Settlements | 181.194256              | 165.106349             |                  | 16.087907         |
| 2        | Agriculture/Farming             | 619.058912              | 602.561085             |                  | 16.497827         |
| 3        | Institutional                   | 2.321033                | 2.795943               | 0.47491          |                   |
| 4        | Woodlot(within settlement)      | 3.576916                | 3.576916               | 0                | 0                 |
| 5        | Cemetery                        | 17.753112               | 4.570621               |                  | 13.182491         |
| 6        | Commercial                      | 0.535215                | 0.203322               |                  | 0.331893          |
| 7        | Water logged area               | 1238.25128              | 1229.365882            |                  | 8.885398          |
| 8        | Irrigation Scheme               | 228.741827              | 233.860353             | 5.118526         |                   |
| 9        | Dock                            | 0.605418                | 0.605418               | 0                | 0                 |
| 10       | Conservation                    | 0                       | 40.765832              | 40.765832        |                   |
| 11       | Abandoned Cemetery              |                         | 10.621366              | 10.621366        |                   |
| 12       | Grazing area                    | 67.98478694             | 65.989669              |                  | 1.99511794        |
| 13       | <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>2360.022756</b>      | <b>2360.022756</b>     | <b>56.980634</b> | <b>56.9806339</b> |

**Source:** Department of Physical Planning (2024)



## 6 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

### 6.1 Risks And Sustainability

The preparation of Mbenje Village Land Use Plan was done by the Mbenje community with technical assistance from Department of Physical Planning in collaboration with Chikwawa District Council and financial assistance from SVTP. The successful implementation of this plan is based on the assumption that various government and donor agencies will be willing to provide financial resources for effective implementation. There is a risk however, that this plan may not be implemented accordingly as a result of the following:

- Changes in the priorities by government, cooperating partners and the community itself
- Delayed implementation of the irrigation project may reduce the impetus generated by the community through the proposed project
- Failure of community to preserve land for proposed projects
- Lack of effective local level structure to oversee plan implementation
- Lack of commitment of beneficiary communities to contribute towards plan implementation
- Change of community leadership within the community may relegate plan implementation to the periphery
- Political interference

The participatory approach of preparing this plan will encourage the community to own it because it is a reflection of their aspirations. The presence of the VDC, CLC and able leadership of the Group Village Head will ensure sustainability of the policy/proposals and projects outlined in the plan.

### 6.2 Implementation Arrangement

Implementation of Mbenje Land Use Plan depends on commitment of various stakeholders that include the Chikwawa District Council, the Area Development Committee (ADC), the Village Development Committee (VDC), the CLC and various local and international funding agencies. Responsibilities of each stakeholder are outlined in Table 7 below:

**Table 6: Implementation Arrangement**

| Item No. | Stakeholder | Responsibility                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | GVH Mbenje  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contribute towards community projects e.g. construction materials and labour, etc</li><li>• Making available land for development projects</li></ul> |



|   |                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Nsanje District Council       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocating resources for projects</li> <li>• Mobilization of resources for projects eg financial, technical, materials etc</li> <li>• Ensuring that plan provisions are followed</li> <li>• Coordinating plan implementation</li> </ul>     |
| 3 | SVTP                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing irrigation scheme</li> <li>• Capacity building for plan implementation structures</li> <li>• Setting up appropriate business model for farming cooperative</li> <li>• Identifying markets for agricultural products</li> </ul> |
| 4 | District Executive Committee  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical support towards plan and project implementation</li> <li>• Supervising of projects and plan implementation</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |
| 5 | Area Development Committee    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising projects in the community</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 6 | Village Development Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising projects in the community</li> <li>• Monitoring project implementation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              |
| 7 | Customary Land Committee      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local land management and administration</li> <li>• Effective plan implementation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                |
| 8 | Development Agencies/NGOs     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing financial resources for projects</li> <li>• Civic education on cross cutting issues</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |

**Source:** Department of Physical Planning (2024)

### 6.3 Monitoring And Evaluation

Monitoring of Mbenje Village Land Use Plan shall be done periodically by Mbenje CLC, Mbenje District Council through the District Physical Planning Office in conjunction with District's Monitoring and Evaluation Office. The Plan shall be reviewed after its life span of 10 years or when need to so arise.

It is important that the mechanisms developed for monitoring and evaluation of GVH Mbenje land use plan should respond to concerns such as:

- Extent to which goals have been achieved and their impact on the community
- The extent of the activities and funding for implementation
- The extent to which resources have been mobilised and how much
- The extent of the planned activities for land use plan implementation

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The plan contains development projects which, if implemented could transform the entire community and contribute towards the overall district's economy. There is likelihood that the plan will be successfully implemented because it has taken on board the aspirations of the community. It is also anticipated that communities will be willing to be part of the success story of participatory planning.