

## **Oliver Mtukudzi's *Pindirai* (intervene): A call for environmental sustainability in Zimbabwe**

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### **Abstract**

*The theme of environmental degradation has emerged as a major concern to activists, politicians, academics and others. Of late, musicians have also sought to contribute to the struggle for environmental conservation. This is because music plays multiple roles in society. It critiques issues such as abuse of power, gender imbalances and the exploitation of the environment. This article utilises Oliver Mtukudzi's song, "Pindirai" to examine its contribution towards environmental sustainability in Zimbabwe. Employing Huggan and Tiffin's postcolonial ecocriticism (2010), the article utilises textual analysis of Mtukudzi's song to identify themes that promote environmental sustainability. Loosely defined, pindirai means (intervene). The article, therefore, investigates Mtukudzi's role as an artist in an endeavour to establish his authority in calling upon his compatriots to become sensitive and friendly to the environment. While appreciating Mtukudzi's artistic creativity and commitment to environmental sustainability, the article interrogates the assumptions behind the portrayal of Zimbabweans as engaging in ecologically harmful behaviour. It suggests the need to tackle deeper questions relating to survival in order to promote environmental sustainability. In turn, this would ensure sustainable development.*

### **Introduction**

The theme of preserving the environment has emerged as a major concern at a time when global warming has become a reality. Specialists from various fields have sought to ensure that humanity plays a major role in ensuring that finite resources are conserved. However, this has created the impression that only those with top rate scientific knowledge can make a contribution. This runs the risk of alienating the majority of members of the community who could make effective contributions towards protecting the environment. As a number of scholars have shown (Mapira & Mazambara 2013; Maposa & Mhaka 2013), indigenous knowledge systems must be accorded their proper place in Africa's quest for sustainable development. Indigenous ways of knowing, including music, must be upheld if the struggle for the environment is to succeed.

This article makes use of Oliver Mtukudzi's song, "*Pindirai*" (Intervene) to draw attention to the significance of music in addressing environmental issues in a Zimbabwean context. The decision to focus on music is informed by the belief that music is quite central to people's lives. Music is important for celebration, warning, mourning or entertainment. Musicians do not compose their songs in a void. Their environmental context usually influences them.

In the context of Zimbabwe, leading musicians such as Mtukudzi have shown profound environmental consciousness. Through most of his songs, Mtukudzi articulates and conserves indigenous values and norms. He is a cultural nationalist who questions those who long for foreign values. When he sings, "*kusvipira mutsime?*" (spitting into the well), he uses this image of the communal well to dissuade his fellow citizens from the uncouth behaviour towards the environment. His music is, therefore, a rich repository of environmental consciousness.

Music as live performance sucks in both the artist and the audience in as far as participation is concerned. Although music is generally sung, the narrative style is alive in the song. This confirms what Caminero-Santangelo and Myers (2011, p. 104) state when they maintain that "Understanding change and continuity in African environments has always involved storytelling". Mtukudzi sings in his own mother-tongue, Shona, a language spoken by the majority of Zimbabweans. In *Decolonising the mind* (1987), Ngugi wa Thiong'o emphasised the importance of using one's own language when expressing ideas that affect any African community. As a result, his music reaches more Shona people than any works written about the environment. Sadly, the genre that he chooses to sing in is largely regarded as entertainment. Hence, even the message is sometimes lost, as people may not listen and take heed of the lyrics. Sometimes people focus on the music, the rhythm of the song and often how danceable it is.

## Background

Cognizant of the centrality of music to African lives and its capacity to inform and shape attitudes towards environmental preservation, in this section we seek to draw attention to the power of music. The history of African music shows that while it entertains, it also has a role to educate society on different issues (edutainment). Music has so much power that it can be used as an instrument to influence a nation. According to Quan-Baffour (2007 p. 209):

The power of music in communicating important messages and disseminating information cannot be underestimated. Since time immemorial, the rhythms of African music and drums not only entertained the masses of the people, but also provided them with food for thought regarding social issues in their communities.

To many people in many cultures, music is an important part of the way of life. Music is a shared experience that unites people in song and dance. It also tells a story. It expresses ideas, offers opinions and enables the sharing of emotions of life's experiences. Music ties generations together. Before the written word, people, tribes and communities used music to narrate stories, teach lessons, tell stories of the hunt, the battle, victory, defeat, medicines, recipe, ritual and many other things. Memory Chirere, (2007, p. 254) argues that "whether we are walking, at work or taking a morning shower, songs erupt from our subconscious mind." In other words, songs reflect a people's way of life, their joys and sorrows.

This article, therefore, analyses Mtukudzi's *Pindirai* as a useful resource for environmental consciousness. Music is one of the most effective ways of communicating environmental messages throughout the global village, regardless of religion, cultural beliefs, gender, race, age or class. Music has the power to address some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing the world. It can be utilized to bring together persons and organisations in the field of music who would want to participate in coming up with solutions to environmental concerns such as land degradation, deforestation, shortage/lack of fresh water and species annihilation. Mtukudzi addresses all these in his song.

In Zimbabwe today, the simple acts of chopping down trees for domestic fuel and the rush for gold and diamonds have left some regions of the country torn up with no sign of rehabilitation of the land degradation. Mtukudzi sings against this background of massive environmental degradation. His song "*Pindirai*" encounters the ghosts of environmental degradation that will haunt the Zimbabwean society for a very long time to come. This study therefore sets out to explore the environmental message in this song, *Pindirai*, identifying the techniques used by Mtukudzi in his message on the environment as well as to apply the message to the situation in modern day Zimbabwe. It sought to respond to questions such as: How does Mtukudzi address environmental sustainability in his song, "*Pindirai*"? What are the artistic techniques that Mtukudzi employs to achieve his objectives in the song, "*Pindirai*"? Can the message behind the song, "*Pindirai*", be applied to modern day Zimbabwe? Can the environmental issues in "*Pindirai*" be located in the postcolonial context in Zimbabwe?

### **Theoretical consideration: Postcolonial ecocriticism**

Employing Huggan and Tiffin's (2010) concept of postcolonial ecocriticism, the article utilises textual analysis of Mtukudzi's song *Pindirai* to identify themes that promote environmental sustainability. Postcolonial ecocriticism is the study of

literature and its relationship to the environment. Huggan and Tiffin's approach seeks to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together in an endeavour to challenge dominant (Northern) paradigms in terms of understanding the environment.

Huggan and Tiffin argue that the question of environmental sustainability cannot be removed from the larger picture of the struggles of the Third World and former colonised countries. In other words, history cannot be divorced from a people's struggles. This is line with what other thinkers such as Walter Rodney (1972) have echoed. They have highlighted the extractive nature of colonialism to the detriment of the African continent. Rodney (1972) highlights the brutal and exploitative nature of European imperialism. In spite of the gospel of civilizing Africa, Rodney observes that there is nothing towards the goal of "civilizing" to show, except openings where raw materials were extracted and exported to Europe. Today, the environmental practices in the Third World are viewed as the result of poor environmental policies by the indigenous people, yet European imperialism contributed to some of the current environmental challenges. The history of poverty and dependency created by colonialism and neo-colonialism are often condoned. Huggan and Tiffin (2010, p. 2) pose the following questions:

Is there any way of reconciling the Northern environmentalisms of the rich (always potentially vainglorious and hypocritical) and the Southern environmentalisms of the poor (often genuinely heroic and authentic)?  
Is there any way of narrowing the ecological gap between coloniser and colonised, each of them locked into their seemingly incommensurable worlds?

The effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism are still a reality. In spite of all efforts to sustain the environment, many policies have failed to reap any plausible benefits for the communities that practice them. In fact, the opposite effect is achieved. According to Huggan and Tiffin (2010, pp. 1-2), postcolonial India, "...even while it claims to practise one version or other of sustainable development, has only succeeded in 'pauperizing millions of people in the agrarian sector and diminishing the stock of plant, water and soil resources at a terrifying rate...'" This can only be explained by the importance of bread and butter issues, where the millions are on the brink of poverty and, therefore, fail to comprehend environmental sustainability. The term '*vapambepfumi*' is commonly used in Zimbabwe. It refers to the grabbing of the natural resources that characterizes the colonial and neo-colonial eras. This includes the environment. In Zimbabwean culture, one's source of wealth includes the land and this also constitutes its flora and fauna. Huggan and Tiffin's theory of postcolonial eccocriticism is, therefore, utilised in an effort to understand the environmental concerns raised by Mtukudzi in "*Pindirai*".

With literary analysis as its principal research method, the study examines Mtukudzi's treatment of the theme of environmentalism in his song "*Pindirai*". The research is qualitative in nature. A textual analysis of *Pindirai* will be employed to demonstrate the utilitarian nature of music in the discourse on the environment and sustainable development. The study is going to draw from issues of environmental conservation in its analysis of Mtukudzi's *Pindirai*.

### **About Oliver Mtukudzi**

In order to understand Mtukudzi's contribution to ecological sensitivity and preservation, it is critical to situate him in his proper context. Undoubtedly, Mtukudzi is one of Zimbabwe's greatest musicians. His discography is highly impressive as he has been very consistent in producing music. In addition to featuring in several documentaries on Zimbabwean music, Mtukudzi played an important role in, as well as composing and arranging the sound-track for Zimbabwe's second film, *Neria*, written by the award winning writer Tsitsi Dangarembga (Mawuru, 1993). This film explores the plight of widows in postcolonial Zimbabwe and challenges the trend where some men abuse patriarchal authority and engage in property-grabbing. Mtukudzi is, therefore, an advocate of gender justice.

The Ugandan author and anthropologist Okot p'Bitek (1986) argues that artists have special gifts that allow them to play a leading role in society. In *Artist the Ruler* (1986), he maintains that artists possess powerful, sensitive and imaginative minds, allowing them to create a thought system for the rest of the people. He observes that artists make laws for society (1986, p. 39). Okot p'Bitek (1986) underlines the relevance of the artist in educating society about the need to develop values that are anchored in the local environment and true African experience. Consistent with the responsibility of the artist as a social commentator, Mtukudzi has played his role as an educator and counsellor, both in music and film. The themes that he has tackled include domestic violence, the plight of children on the streets, rape, child abuse, gender relations and environmental consciousness. Therefore, Mtukudzi's "Tuku music" deals with social, political and economic issues. It spans from colonial to postcolonial Zimbabwe. His song, "*Pindirai*", purposefully selected for this study, is effective and quite convincing in its call for environmental awareness and conservation.

**“Pindirai” (intervene): The song**

Mtukudzi’s “Pindirai” (Intervene) is an inspiring song in which he bemoans environmental degradation. Mtukudzi goes further to implore society to be friendly to the environment. He itemizes the bad things done by society to the environment and how this backfires. One environmentalist, Sunderlal Bahaguna (cited by Tiffin & Huggan, 2010), calls the human being ‘the butcher of Earth.’ Below are the main verses in the song that capture the different environmental issues:

*Vakuruwe-e* (The powers that be)

*Pindirai x 2* (Please intervene)

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Madzimambowe-e* (Kings)

*Pindirai x 2* (Please Intervene)

*Mhuri yenyu yapererwa nezivo* (Your family now lacks knowledge)

*Vana vedu kupererwa nenjere* (Our children now lack intelligence or a lost generation which does not know what to do)

*Pindirai* (Please intervene)

*Mhuri yenyu yapererwa nezivo*

*Vana vedu kupererwa nenjere*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Hatichina mumvuri*

*Hatichina mapango* (We no longer have poles)

*Duhwino hatichina* (we no longer have natural swimming pools)

*Hove hatichina* (Fish we no longer have)

*Raiva dziva rave zambuko x2*

*Aive madziva ave mazambuko* (Pools have become crossing places)

*Pindirai* (Please intervene)

*Raiva dziva rave zambuko x2*

*Aive madziva ave mazambuko* (Pools have become crossing places)

*Pindirai* (Please intervene)

*Vanotema miti vasina ruzivo* (They chop down trees without knowledge)

*Vagovhiya chidembo vamire kumhepo* (and they slaughter a skunk by the windward side)

*Kusvipira mutsime* (Spitting into the well)

*Pindirai* (please intervene)

*Vanotema miti vasina ruzivo* (They chop down trees without knowledge)

*Vagovhiya chidembo vamire kumhepo* (and they slaughter a skunk by the windward side)

*Kusvipira mutsime* (Spitting into the well)

*Pindirai*

*Kutsvairira munzizi segomba remarara* (Using riverbeds as if there were dumping sites)

*Vatora marara kuunganidza muberere* (at the same time amassing rubbish in the homestead)

*Pindirai*

*Kutsvairira munzizi segomba remarara* (to sweep dirt into rivers, as if the rivers are dumping sites)

*Vatora marara kuunganidza muberere*

*Pindirai*

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Tatadza kuchengeta masango* (We have failed to look after the forests)

*Kutadza kuchengeta nzizi* (Failing to look after the rivers)

*Mhepo yekufema yangova utsi* (Breathing air is now all polluted by gases)

*Kusvipira mutsime* (Spitting into the well)

*Pindirai*

*Tatadza kuchengeta masango*

*Kutadza kuchengeta nzizi*

*Mhepo yekufema yangova utsi*

*Kusvipira mutsime*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

*Vakuruwee*

*Pindirai x 2*

### **A call for intervention**

Mtukudzi presents environmental conservation as a responsibility for everyone. Whereas the struggle has been presented as one for distinguished experts, he extends it to every member of society. For Mtukudzi, there is no neutral space when it comes to preserving the environment. There should not be any individual who sits on the fence. All members of society must be alert to the danger stalking them and take their roles seriously. He lambasts today's society which does not take environmental issues seriously:

*Mhuri yenyu yapererwa nezivo* (Your family now lacks knowledge)  
*Vana vedu kupererwa nenjere* (Our children now lack intelligence).

In the stanza above, Mtukudzi confesses that the human family has lost wisdom. It is a profound statement which highlights vulnerability and humility. Humanity has caused damage to the environment due to arrogance and a false sense of superiority. By acknowledging that human beings lack wisdom and knowledge, Mtukudzi seeks to inculcate the right attitude which will contribute towards protecting the environment. While he starts off by appealing because of a problem that has been caused by the generality of humanity, he later personalizes and takes the responsibility as he looks for solutions. This comes out when he sings:

*Tatadza kuchengeta masango* (We have failed to look after the forests)  
*Kutadza kuchengeta nzizi* (Failing to look after the rivers).

It is not a master-servant or adult-child issue. The persona in the song calls upon all age groups to participate in environmental conservation. The term '*pindirai*' is a refrain in the song. It is mostly used in relation to disastrous situations that call for combined effort. Collective effort often comes with success. Mtukudzi employs the concept of the collective in a similar sense. Environmental degradation is presented as a disaster that requires everyone to participate in restoring the environment to its utopia. He uses the "utopian potential of music to prefigure a good society" (Ingram, 2010, p. 21). In other words, he takes advantage of the music genre to walk down memory lane, registering the loss of what life used to be before the pollution and general environmental degradation that characterizes contemporary society.

Music as a genre has the power of reaching out to more people than would any other work of art. Mtukudzi shows his acute awareness of the pressing environmental issues of his time. He bemoans the pollution of the environment when he sings, "*Mhepo yekufema yangova utsi* (the air we breathe is now all polluted). This is a critical issue which poses a major challenge to the health and well-being of communities and individuals. Pollution threatens the viability of life and Mtukudzi alerts his compatriots of the real danger that is before them.

Mtukudzi also castigates those who engage in anti-social, environmentally dangerous practices, "*kusvipira mutsime*" (spitting into the well). He calls for the proper socialization of all members of society in order to protect the natural heritage. Indigenous knowledge systems have been compromised as there are now individuals who are willing to poison the communal well. Such individuals have lost their *hunhu* (humanity) and Mtukudzi seeks to reawaken this spirit in



them. He highlights the thoughtlessness in their actions: "*kutsvairira munzizi segomba remarara* (sweeping dirt into rivers as if the rivers are dumping sites). Here, Mtukudzi draws attention to siltation and its negative effective. He challenges people to appreciate the difference between rivers and dumping sites. Confusing the two creates serious environmental problems.

### **The role of the elders/ kings in society**

Most African societies have different traditional leaders who play an important role in village life. These usually comprise those who are of age in a particular community. The word '*vakuru*' that Mtukudzi uses in his song "*Pindirai*" is ambiguous as it refers to adults, elders in a community, and at the same time those in the position of authority. Traditionally, these were kings. Mtukudzi reiterates this point when he actually uses the word "*madzimambo*". *Madzimambo* literally refers to Kings. In today's rural communities, these are people in positions of responsibility. Popular images of traditional Kings show them as dealing with different judiciary issues at the communal court (*padare*). They counsel and punish accordingly. They represent the wisdom that comes with age. According to Haverkort, Miller and Gonese (2002, p. 149), traditional leaders such as kings, queens and "rulers are not simply political heads, they are also the mystical and religious guides, the divine symbol of their people's health and welfare". Therefore, to call upon them to be involved in environmental issues "*madzimambo we pindirai*" is quite strategic as they are the ones who deal with the people at grassroots levels. If the ambiguous term "*vakuru*" that we have made reference to above, is to mean those in positions of authority, Mtukudzi's "*vakuru we pindirai*" would, therefore, be an appeal for solutions from the top, those in positions of authority, as on their own, the grassroots alone would succeed. It is the same concept of the collective that Mtukudzi continues to uphold throughout the song.

Furthermore, if the term "*vakuru*" is to mean adults or elders, it would still hold water. Adults have a key role to play, which is to mould children into responsible citizens. Through indigenous knowledge systems such as traditional folklore, they teach and guide children and the youth on best practice in as far as environmental conservation is concerned. Hence, when Mtukudzi calls upon elders to intervene "*mhuri yenyu yapererwa neruzivo/ vana vedu kupererwa nenjere/pindirai*", (Your family now lacks knowledge/our children no longer have wisdom/intervene), this is important as the appeal seeks to involve both adults and children in effort to conserve the environment for sustainable development.

It is vital to appreciate that Mtukudzi is acutely aware of the role of the community and its leaders in the process of preserving the environment. This task will not be accomplished by some “saviours” from outside. What the community will do will determine the extent of their success. Here, we appreciate Mtukudzi’s confidence in the capacity of the community to charter its own destiny. It will not be the foreigners or the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s) who will transform attitudes towards the environment. Communities and their leaders have the responsibility to save the environment, Mtukudzi maintains.

Mtukudzi’s refrain *Vakuruwee (pindirai)*, is a persistent reminder that leaders in the community have a job to do about the degradation that now characterises the natural environment. Repetition in this case reinforces the need for environmental awareness and rehabilitation.

### **Mtukudzi’s techniques: Proverbs and metaphors in song**

Music is a live performance that sucks in both the artist and the audience in as far as participation is concerned. It is constituted in the creative arts that have kept society moving since time immemorial. Although music is sung, the narrative style is alive in the song. This confirms what Caminero-Santangelo and Myers (2011, p. 104) state when they maintain that “Understanding change and continuity in African environments has always involved storytelling”. Mtukudzi sings in his own mother-tongue, Shona, a language spoken by the majority of Zimbabweans. Through the use of a rich linguistic repertoire of the Shona language, Mutukudzi’s song tells a story. His music has more far reaching effects than any works written or spoken about the environment. In *Decolonising the mind* (1987), Ngugi wa Thiong’o emphasises the importance of using a writer’s own mother language when expressing ideas that affect any African community. In a similar fashion, “Ngugi’s writing overflows with, and very much depends on African (Kikuyu/Swahili) words, proverbs, and storytelling techniques” (Ibid). Likewise, Achebe (1958, p. 6) underlines the importance of proverbs when he says, “...proverbs are the palm wine with which words are eaten.”

Through the use of a rich linguistic repertoire of the Shona language, Mutukudzi’s song tells a story. He employs one of the most popular proverbs in the Shona language to juxtapose pre-colonial and postcolonial Africa in order to show that what used to be, is no longer what it was: “*Aive madziva ava mazambuko*” (what used to be pools are now crossing places). Gyekye (1996) collected over one hundred and fifty (150) proverbs and interpreted them. According to Haverkort, Millar and Gonese (2002, p. 146):

These proverbs represent different values related to religion, immortality, survival, brotherhood, communal and individual values, morality, responsibility, marriage and family life, work ethic, chieftaincy, aesthetic values, knowledge and wisdom, human rights and ancestors...by listening to the proverbs, and trying to understand their deeper meaning, much can be learned about the values and motivation of the people that use them.

Therefore, "*aive madziva ava mazambuko*" goes a long way in addressing environmental issues. The persona in the song seeks to enlighten people on practices that lead to environmental degradation in general, and siltation in particular.

### Revisiting the "*dziva*" (pool)

*Dziva* (pool) is a body of water that is deep and prolific with fish. However, in "*Pindirai*", Mtukudzi mourns that this "*dziva*" has been turned into nothing because of people's lack of knowledge on how to conserve the environment. The pool is now even a place of no consequence, where people frequently pass by. The voice in Mtukudzi's song laments, not only the obvious death of aquatic life and its failure to sustain livelihood anymore, "*hove hatichina*" (we no longer have fish); he also bemoans the loss of entertainment as the proverbial pool was also associated with swimming for entertainment. Hence, his '*duhwino hatichina*' (we no longer have anywhere to swim). This Shona proverb connotes the loss of what used to be, a period when there was plenty. Nostalgically, it yearns for an era gone by, when the environment was well looked after. Mtukudzi does not end there, he does not openly mention that trees have been depleted but sings of:

*Hatichina mumvuri* (we no longer have shade)

*Hatichina mapango* (we no longer have timber [for building]).

The three elements that Mtukudzi mentions point poignantly at the loss of balance that nature has always provided. These are loss of food (*hove hatichina*), entertainment (*duhwino hatichina*) and shelter (*hatichina mapango*).

### ***Kusvipira mutsime*: The water-well as a metaphor**

Through most of his songs, Mtukudzi articulates and preserves indigenous values and norms. He is a cultural nationalist who questions those who long for foreign values. When he sings, "*kusvipira mutsime?*" (spitting into the water-well), he uses this image of the communal water-well to dissuade his fellow citizens from

the uncouth behaviour towards the environment. In same manner, another distinguished Zimbabwean artist, the Chirikure Chirikure (1998), in his poem *Hakurarwi*, (We shall not sleep) registers the same sentiments over uncouth social behaviour when he says poet:

*Hatingaregi uchiwondonga takangotarisa* - We cannot just watch while you tear things down

*Hatingaregi uchibvoronga takangonyarara* - We cannot just keep quiet while you stir up storms

*Hatingaregi uchiwondomora takangodzvondora* - We cannot just stare while you bring down the walls.

*Zuva riya wakatuka mbuya tikazvinyarara* - That day you insulted granny and we kept quiet.

*Riya zuva ukatengesa pfuma tikangozvinyarara* - The other day you sold the family milk-cow, we said nothing

*Nhasi woisa tsvina mutsime?* - Today, will you shit in the water-well?

*tsvina mutsime?* - Shit in the water-well?

*tsvina mutsime?* - Shit in the water-well? (Chirikure Chirikure 1998, p. 9, translated into English by Charles Mungoshi 2004).

The correlation between Mtukudzi and Chirikure Chirikure serves to demonstrate practices that are unacceptable to the people. In this case, the communal water-well becomes a symbol of the shared resources that nature has at its disposal. Crime against that nature affects everyone. Therefore, it is crime against humanity. Mtukudzi uses another common saying which is synonymous with spoiling the village water-well; the act of skinning a skunk (a stinky wild animal) while standing windward (*Kuvhiyira chidembo umire kumhepo*). The bad smell would affect the whole community.

Mtukudzi's use of the water-well as a metaphor is quite effective. Water plays a central role in people's lives. It is essential for consumption, eradication of diseases that are linked to shortage of safe water, cleansing and other purposes. Even in different religions, the significance of water is quite evident. This explains why the water-well is a central image in different forms of art. Chirikure Chirikure's *Hakurarwi* (1998) chronicles a number of misdemeanors that have been perpetrated by an individual. Society seems to tolerate the uncouth behaviour by the individual. It is only after the individual relieves themselves in the family water-well that everyone turns against the perpetrator of such an act. Therefore, Mtukudzi sings:

*Tatadza kuchengeta Masango*  
ests

We have failed to protect the forests

*Kutadza kuchengeta nzizi*

Failed to protect the rivers

*Mhepo yekufema yangova utsi*  
*Kusvipira mutsime*  
*Pindirai x 2*

Breathing air is now all smoke  
Spitting into the well  
Intervene

He sings about those who pollute wells. One is made to realise the bad effects of deforestation, siltation, water and air pollution, as well as the disgust with which such acts are treated. Participating in any of the three forms of environmental degradation is tantamount to contaminating the water-well which is meant to sustain the whole community. Both Chirikure and Mtukudzi identify the water-well as a powerful resource for the well-being of the community. Individuals who pollute the water-well are regarded as “witches” (*varoyi*). They work against the common good and they must be challenged if health is to be restored. Mtukudzi, therefore, utilizes the metaphor of the water-well to promote environmental consciousness.

### **Challenges in Mtukudzi's approach**

The voices (those of the lead singer and the supporting singers) in “*Pindirai*” represent the collective of the marginalized in Zimbabwe underpin the voices of a people who without a progressive leadership to intervene are lost. Although Mtukudzi has done very well to cultivate the spirit of environmental preservation, we deduce a number of challenges. First, Mtukudzi appears to subscribe to a romantic view of African indigenous knowledge systems on preserving the environment. Although we have supported the appropriation of the indigenous knowledge system to address environmental degradation, we are aware of the tendency to exaggerate its efficacy. There is need for constant vigilance with regard to environmental issues because there are occasions when African traditional religions are not always ecologically sensitive (Taringa, 2006). Traditional leaders have sometimes contributed towards pollution by accepting payments from unscrupulous individuals who would be cultivating in prohibited areas.

Secondly, there is need to guard against blaming victims who are struggling against the effects of colonialism. Huggan and Tiffin (2010) point to the effect of imperialist development projects on the environment. In many instances, colonial policies left many Africans in crowded places, while the postcolonial fast track land resettlement has not succeeded in decongesting the communal areas. It is, therefore, unfair to overlook the impact of historical and economic forces in shaping attitudes towards the environment in Zimbabwe. There is a real danger that the “small people” get criticised for the sins of the “big people.” According to Huggan and Tiffin (2010), the development projects that target Third World Countries are often responsible for the widening gap between rich and poor nations. It is, therefore, up to the developing nations to have their own home-

grown projects that can facilitate sustainable development. Mtukudzi appeals to *vakuruwe* (elders and chiefs) in the community. These leaders are expected to assist in fostering development projects that foresee less harmful practices on the environment. Chitando and Madongonda (2012) have pointed out how, if traditional systems of environmental conservation are adhered to, a healthy natural environment would thrive. They demonstrate how, traditionally, community leaders were responsible for the welfare of the environment. In a similar manner, Mtukudzi is appealing to the community (through its leaders) to take environmental welfare as everyone's responsibility today.

The abject poverty that was created by unequal development projects has roots in the colonial era and still persists today under neo-colonialism. Due to this, the majority of the Africans and the rest of the Third World poor have turned to the environment for survival. It is the easiest form of income generation albeit the harmful effects on the environment. So, when Mtukudzi sings and blames the Zimbabwean for it, he is partly justified since the direct perpetrators are the Zimbabweans. However, it is unfortunate that the environmental degradation that manifests itself does not tell the historical undertones of the actions of the people today.

Lastly, we call for a more nuanced approach to the issue of preserving the environment. Using indigenous spiritual beliefs, women have contributed immensely towards preserving the environment (Mukonyora, 1999). It is, therefore, important to acknowledge their positive role. To lump the different actors together as being collectively guilty is to erase the fundamental role that women play in addressing environmental concerns. Society must appreciate women's contribution to environmental preservation and collaborate with them.

## Conclusion

This article has analysed Mtukudzi's "*Pindirai*" using postcolonial ecocriticism theory. It set out to explore how Mtukudzi addresses environmental sustainability in his song, "*Pindirai*", discuss the artistic techniques that Mtukudzi employs to achieve his objectives in the song, "*Pindirai*", establish whether the message behind the song, could be applied to modern day Zimbabwe and whether the environmental issues in "*Pindirai*" could be situated in the postcolonial context in Zimbabwe. The article achieved these targets by engaging in a critical analysis of Mtukudzi's approach to the issue of protecting the environment. While appreciating his sterling work, the article noted that there are some problematic dimensions. Mtukudzi has called for society to come together to address the pressing environmental concerns. He succeeds in mobilizing different social actors to take environmental protection as their direct responsibility. However,

there is need to acknowledge that indigenous knowledge systems are not always effective and that sometimes the impact of colonialism has persisted in terms of preventing Africans from acting in ways that conserve the environment. Overall, we contend that Mtukudzi's passionate cry in "Pindirai" must be heeded and more actors must come on board to ensure that the Earth and all that is in it is protected and used with wisdom.

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### **Discography**

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