

Report back from the stakeholders meeting on the Batoka Hydro-electric scheme, held in Livingstone and Victoria Falls by [Stop The Batoka Dam On The Zambezi River](#):

The team undertaking the ESIA admitted that the first meeting was a shambles. A huge pat on the back to everyone for voicing his or her support, we are making a difference. The proponents of the project have been forced to recognize that it is a highly emotive issue and it is not going to be slipped through the back door. This second meeting was held as the first was so clearly inadequate and they are doing due diligence.

Key points:

- 1) The dam is still “proposed” and the wording on documentation has been changed to indicate this. However, there is a strong arrogant sense from the Zambezi River Authority that all of this is merely a formality and the dam will be built regardless.
- 2) The ESIA team indicated they are already behind schedule for an operating dam by 2025, no solid indication of a completed operating structure was given.
- 3) The dam is required for power production to “regional countries”, South Africa was mentioned repeatedly as the end market. Zambezi River Authority acknowledged that Zambia has an existing power protocol and there are many alternate sources for power and that Zambia is self sufficient for power today and in the future, but was uninterested in pursuing this. This directly contradicts the motivational submission for the project, as supplied on ZRA documentation: “the key motivation for the project is to allow the governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe to meet the growing demands for power. Both countries suffer from national deficits”. Once again we need to be reminded that this dam is totally for export.
- 4) The proposed dam wall will be 176m high and the water will back up to rapid number 6. This is the maximum use policy, on a “757m” contour line. There is an alternate level on a lower wall, which the ESIA team is earmarking for engineer input. This is based off the “740m” contour line which will flood back to rapid 8 during high water and rapid 13 during low water.
- 5) The dam is considered a “run of the river” dam in that the through flow is considerable and it is not an impoundment structure. Zambezi River Authority indicated run of river turbines and other structured low impact technology is “too new” to be considered here.
- 6) The ESIA team indicate there is a 10-15% decrease in rainfall in the Zambezi basin and the dam will effect weather patterns in an already vulnerable area where over 60% of the population are subsistence farmers.
- 7) The ESIA team indicate that energy alternatives have been and will be considered, though this is seen largely as additional required production of power perhaps for rural electrification which do not detract from the need for this dam.
- 8) The Katambora barrage structure to the best of the knowledge of the ESIA team has not been pursued...yet.

All in all a well run informative meeting, chalk and cheese to the first, well supported about 80-100 people. the ESIA is being done correctly. The bottom line is that it is a Zambian political decision. Is the destruction of a UNESCO World Heritage site and a functioning tourism industry worth the provision of power to regional players who have mismanaged their own development? Additionally we must consider what the power generation field is going to look like in a further 15 years when the dam is built? Is it worth incurring a 6 billion dollar debt and the loss of a world heritage site for a superstructure that may very well be obsolete when it is completed. The impetus for the dam is largely being driven regionally as opposed to within Zambia.

Thanks for the continued support.

