

# ***Land Redistribution in Zimbabwe***<sup>1</sup>

*Simon Pazvakavambwa*<sup>2</sup>

---

## ***Introduction***

Zimbabwe has been undertaking Land Redistribution since independence in 1980. The Land redistribution program in Zimbabwe has attracted a lot of attention and criticism, some of it unwarranted from the international community yet there appears to be little attempt to appreciate the context within which the program was undertaken. This paper, though concentrating on the post 2000 period known as the fast track phase will try to explain the historical linkages that culminated in the current program.

## ***Historical context***

Land redistribution in Zimbabwe did not start with the advent of independence. Prior to the colonization of the country by the British, the people of Zimbabwe lived in communities where the traditional chiefs were the recognized land authorities. The colonialists identified land suitable for

commercial agriculture and large scale ranching and displaced the local people whom they resettled together with their chiefs in what are now known as communal lands. As time progressed, communal lands could not support the increasing population and land degradation resulted due to congestion. Communal lands are therefore a creation of the very early land redistribution program carried out by the colonialists.

The colonialists strengthened their land reform and redistribution program by enacting entrenched legislation. In 1931, the Land Apportionment Act was passed. This act designated land in terms of who lived and farmed therein. In 1951, the Land Husbandry act was introduced to reinforce agricultural practices in the areas designated by the previous acts. This legislative program was not through universal suffrage as Africans were not allowed to vote. Hence a small minority determined the future and destiny of the majority. This was to be main reason for the protracted armed struggle that later ensued.

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe was fought mainly over the land issue. Although there were other repressions meted out on the black population such as prohibitions from owning urban land, prohibitions from developing in certain areas as well as subtle separate development, land constituted the major bone of contention. Africans had no rights to any land, even land in communal areas where the majority of them lived. Instead land rights were held on their behalf by the administrative machinery set up by colonial governments such as the District Commissioners. Traditional chiefs who were the true representatives of the people were stripped of their powers most of which were now exercised by the District Commissioners. There was even a separate education system for the blacks. The whole idea was to keep the blacks as subordinates and exploit their labor. The land redistribution program carried out in the 1960's provided the spark for confrontation. Although some of this program was for urban expansion, it was the unexplained

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been prepared for the workshop "Land Redistribution in Africa: Towards a common vision." The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank and its affiliated organizations, or those of the Executive Directors of The World Bank or the governments they represent.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Pazvakavambwa is a former Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Rural Resources and Water Development in Zimbabwe - Views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the Zimbabwe government.

### **Box 1**

Between 1965 and 1970, the colonial government carried out what may be considered as the final land redistribution before the war forced them to the negotiating table. Hundreds of families were removed from the area between Mvuma and Kwekwe to create massive ranches which were then allocated to members of the then ruling Rhodesia Front party. The people removed were resettled in the Gokwe and Silobela areas where they had to start a new life with very little assets salvaged from their previous homes. People were moved in groups according to their chieftainships. No compensation was paid. People were moved using government transport and were provided with some food during the long trips to their new areas. Establishing new homes was a difficult task and depending on when people moved, some lost a whole cropping season. Transit camps included makeshift homes at government schools. This added to the bitterness that later fueled anxiety for land ownership.

and almost inhuman removal of people to pave way for white settlers that eventually led to the armed struggle. The level of deprivation had reached intolerable limits and hence the liberation struggle. The war of liberation displaced large numbers of people some of whom were enclosed in so-called “protected” villages in an attempt to starve liberation fighters. The conflict was bitter. This bitterness carried over into the independence era. One therefore needs to understand and appreciate that the land redistribution program in Zimbabwe was carried out against a background of historical bitterness.

The war of liberation was fought over the land issue where the local indigenous people did not have access to land in their country of birth. The protracted war eventually forced the colonialists to negotiate. The negotiations resulted in the Lancaster House Constitution which was the initial supreme law for post independence Zimbabwe. It is essential to appreciate the chronological events in the land redistribution history so that present events may be put in the correct context. Many writers have tended to blame current events on the government of Zimbabwe without putting the correct context into the argument. While no land reform or redistribution program is perfect, there are always two sides to an equation.

## ***Early Land Redistribution Program - 1980 to 1989***

At independence in 1980, the new independent government inherited a skewed agricultural sector consisting of three distinct sub-sectors as follows:

- A large scale commercial sub-sector with about 6000 white farmers. The sector comprised more than 45% of prime agricultural land, mainly in the high potential natural regions I, II and III.
- A small scale commercial farming sub-sector with about 8500 black farmers taking up 5% of agricultural land. More than 50% of this land lies in the drier natural regions IV and V. A distinct feature of the small scale commercial farming areas was that in the majority of cases, these were created as buffer zones between communal and commercial areas.
- A communal sub-sector with approximately 800000 peasant farmers comprising less than 50% of agricultural land. 75% of this land lay in the less potential natural regions IV and V.

The early post independence land redistribution program was based on the following tenets:

**Table 1 - Initial targets for Land Redistribution**

Tenure category	Area (m.ha) 1980	Target area (m. ha)
Large scale commercial farming sector	15.5	5.0
Small scale commercial farming sector	1.4	1.4
Resettlement	-	8.3
Communal areas	16.4	16.4
State farms	0.3	2.5
National parks and urban settlements	6.0	6.0
Totals	39.6	39.6

Source: Ministry of Lands Agriculture and Rural Resettlement

- A declared policy of reconciliation
- A mutually accepted policy of the willing buyer willing seller process
- A program of compensation for the white commercial farmers supported by the United Kingdom government
- A well targeted policy of first refusal option on the part of government<sup>3</sup>
- Clear and concise selection criteria targeting experienced farmers to maintain and enhance productivity.

The early land redistribution program was adopted by government in order to address the skewed distribution of the resource observed at independence. Settler selection targeted the following categories of people:

- Refugees and people displaced by the war. This category included extra-territorial refugees, urban refugees and former inhabitants of protected villages.
- People without land who were resident in the overcrowded communal areas, and
- People with insufficient land to maintain themselves and their families.

From the above categories, it is evident that the early land redistribution program had a

<sup>3</sup> Under the first refusal option, all land was to be offered to Government first. Only after government had refused to acquire such land for whatever reason was it to be offered to other interested parties. Implementation of the first refusal option was based on consultations whose primary objective was to ensure that commercial agriculture land remained consolidated and intact.

social focus. The targeting of only 5 million hectares indicates that the government wanted to maintain a viable commercial agriculture sector. Further, provisions such as the first refusal option also indicates that government was interested in ensuring that the commercial agriculture sector remained intact.

The target for land redistribution as defined at independence would result in the land categories show in table 1.

Of the 10 million hectares to be acquired from the commercial farming sector 8.3 million was to be redistributed to landless people while 2.2 million hectares was to constitute state farms. These targets were agreed and the land redistribution program was to be based on them.

The government's first refusal option was intended to ensure the continued consolidation of commercial agricultural land and avoid fragmentation. In this process government turned down offers of land in areas where unnecessary fragmentation would result.

Unbeknown to government, the commercial farmers through their representatives, the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) facilitated the offers for land to government in the less potential areas in large blocks while placing their members in those high potential areas where offers were made in dribs and drabs. In essence, this enabled the commercial farmers to consolidate their land holdings in the high potential areas. By 1989 which marked the end of the first post

independence phase of the land redistribution program, significant developments took place:

- The British Government stopped paying for compensation
- Commercial farmers had consolidated themselves in the most fertile part of the country
- The number of offers suddenly dropped significantly
- The commercial farmers rallied and prepared themselves for a legal challenge of the government's land resettlement program.
- The original intention of reconciliation appeared to be now rejected by the farmers preferring instead to take the government to court
- The number of court challenges increased

## ***The quiet phase - 1990 to 1999<sup>4</sup>***

The period between 1990 and 1999 was a relatively quiet period from the land redistribution point of view. The period was however marked by increased activity in the courts. The Land Acquisition Act came under tremendous challenge and most of its weaknesses were exposed as farmers sought to exploit the loopholes in the law. Even those farmers who had willingly offered their land for resettlement approached the courts seeking a reversal of the process.

The reduced activity in land redistribution led to increased agitation as the quest for land increased among the people. The government of Zimbabwe kept their options open as far as the issue of compensation is concerned. Government committed itself to

---

<sup>4</sup> Although the period is regarded as quiet, there was a lot of activity in the courts as farmers challenged the law under which land acquisition was undertaken. Challenges in the courts slowed down the redistribution process and increased anxiety and agitation among the landless.

compensating for improvements only and not for the land. Prevarication on the part of the British Government placed the entire land redistribution program into jeopardy. The agreed participation modalities no longer obtained. Increased pressure for land was marked by agitations of possible demonstrations and mass expropriation. Government managed to keep these anxieties at bay.

The immediate post independence land redistribution program was hailed as a huge success and a model for land redistribution in a country previously characterized by bitter conflict. Success factors can be attributable to the following:

- There was an agreed program and shared responsibilities among the parties
- The land redistribution program was well planned
- Planning moved ahead of settlement, In other words people moved only after the planning process had been done
- The parties delivered on their promises
- Essential social infrastructure to service the new settlers was established in tandem with the redistribution program. This reduced or removed hesitation from among potential settlers as they did not have to maintain two homes due to lack of infrastructure such as schools for their school going children.
- There was proper agricultural planning which took into account the potential of the area to be resettled.
- The program was transparent and had little political influence.

The first phase of the land redistribution program also enjoyed success because most of the land that was used for resettlement had been abandoned during the war of liberation. Although some previous owners who had long abandoned their farms came to lay claim for compensation this was done without them delaying the land redistribution program particularly the

planning and subsequent settler emplacement process.

The dormant period between 1990 and the year 1999 was characterized by low activity. Government sought to re-plan those areas that had been set up under the accelerated resettlement program by ensuring that proper infrastructure for the settlers was provided. However, the fact that the pace of land redistribution had completely stalled created new anxieties and agitation among the people.

In 1998, the Government of Zimbabwe convened a donors' conference to revive the land redistribution program. The dormant period had been characterized by a total withdrawal of support by the British Government. No new offers of land were coming and court challenges were increasing. In the eyes of the government, there was a real danger that the gains that had been obtained during the early part of the program could be reversed.

Pressure for land mounted. War veterans joined in the agitation as a distinct group. The donors' conference yielded a promise by the United Kingdom government that they would once again support the land redistribution program by paying compensation for the land while the Government of Zimbabwe would continue to pay for improvements.

Two years passed and no tangible action was observed on the part of the British. In the year 2000, matters got to a head and what have now been known as land demonstrations began. One needs to understand and appreciate the tensions that led to the demonstrations, which other literature refer to as land invasions. Clearly, the people of Zimbabwe who still expected to be resettled had lost patience. The initial demonstrations targeted land that belonged to chieftainships. People sought to claim the land of their fore fathers that had been expropriated from them by the colonial government. Although the government of Zimbabwe was resolved that the land redistribution program could not be based

on claims of erstwhile chieftainships, there was so much pressure that the demonstrations became spontaneous. What followed completely changed the nature and character of the land redistribution program in Zimbabwe.

## ***The “Fast Track” Land Redistribution Program***

Massive land demonstrations throughout the country had to be contained and an orderly approach to land redistribution in its new form had to be instituted. Government put an immediate stop to land invasions by enacting legislation that sought to protect land occupiers up to a certain date.<sup>5</sup> Any land invasions after the deadline date were dishonored and dealt with decisively. However, the pace of settlement had gone ahead of the process of planning and this is where critics of Zimbabwe's land redistribution program describe it as “chaotic”. This description can only be acceptable in the absence of the immediate events leading to land invasions.

Land demonstrations or invasions during the fast track phase demanded an equally rapid response from government if peoples' aspirations were to be contained and realized. The government still wanted to see orderly land redistribution taking place and this meant that the spontaneous redistribution by people of various categories including traditional chiefs and war veterans had to be stopped. However, due to the prevailing atmosphere and the fact that tempers had been allowed to reach boiling point, it meant that the mode of land redistribution had to be different from that of the first phase. Return to orderly

---

<sup>5</sup> The land Acquisition (Protection of Land Occupiers) regulations of 2001 protected and guaranteed settlement to all people who had occupied land up to 31 March 2001. Any other land occupations after that date were not protected by government and were dealt with decisively.

settlement and land redistribution procedures had to be re-established. Unlike in the first phase where the program was driven by technical assessments and proper administrative procedures, the fast track phase was highly politically charged. This posed a major challenge for government and the technicians charged with the implementation of the land redistribution program.

To facilitate the process, new procedures were established. Under the Land acquisition act, when government intended to acquire any land, that intention was published in the government gazette and a preliminary notice was served. If the farmers objected to the preliminary notice, then government was to obtain an order under section 8 of the act. This law was a major impediment in that many farmers had objected thereby necessitating government to seek an order from the courts. This process further delayed the pace of land redistribution resulting in increased agitation among potential settlers.

The objectives of the land Reform and Redistribution Program during the Fast Track phase were revised as follows:

- To acquire in excess of 11 million hectares of land from the Large Scale Commercial Sector for resettlement
- To de-congest the over-populated and / or overstocked wards and villages for the benefit of landless people. This was to be in the form of a new Model A1 (villagized, self-contained and three-tier land use plans)
- To indigenize the large scale commercial settlement schemes
- To reduce the intensity and extent of poverty among rural families and farm workers by providing them with adequate land for agricultural use
- To increase the contribution of the agricultural sector to the gross Domestic Product and foreign currency earnings

- To promote environmentally sustainable utilization of land through agriculture and eco-tourism
- To develop and integrate small scale farmers into the mainstream of commercial agriculture
- To create conditions for sustainable economic, social and political stability.

It is worth noting that the land redistribution program had made a major policy shift by including commercial agriculture as part of its focus. This was achieved through the introduction of the A2 model and the Commercial Farm Settlement Scheme. The A2 model was to replace the commercial sector but with a focus to increase the number of farmers by demarcating land holdings larger than the A1 but not as large as the existing commercial farm holdings.

To alleviate problems associated with gazetting, government introduced a de-listing procedure. Under this arrangement, if government deemed a farm to be outside the land settlement criteria, that farm could be de-listed either directly by government or upon application by the farmer. The delisting process was to be implemented by Provincial Governors and Resident Ministers. The inclusion of Provincial Governors into the land redistribution program further heightened the political disposition the program had taken. Most decisions were therefore made for political rather than for technical or professional expediency. As a result, farms that could be recommended for de-listing by technocrats were not de-listed for political reasons. The net result was that some provinces regarded all commercial farms as potentially available for resettlement without exception. Some properties went through the process of de-listing and re-listing several times before they were eventually settled.

The fast track phase of land redistribution introduced two settlement models. Model A1 was an improved Model A of the initial resettlement models in that individual farmers were allocated more land. A new

model A2 was introduced for commercial farming. Under the first phase of land redistribution in Zimbabwe, there was no commercial model for individual farmers. The model was introduced as it was realized that unless some effort was made to preserve commercial farming, this category would eventually disappear from the Zimbabwe farming scene, as all land was now targeted for redistribution.

Progress under the fast track land redistribution program was rapid though there were many shortcomings. Table 2 indicates progress as at October 2002.

As can be observed from the above table, the pace of fast track land redistribution was rapid. If one takes into account the total land redistributed so far, it can be observed that this almost constitutes the entire commercial farming area at independence in 1980. There was a major departure from the target set in 1980 to the target now under the fast track land redistribution program. Some of the reasons for this major departure were the following:

- The withdrawal by the British Government from supporting the land acquisition program as originally agreed created an atmosphere of animosity and mistrust.
- The delay in reaffirming their commitment to support the land redistribution program resulted in anxiety and impatience among the people.
- The non-delivery of the promise made during the 1998 conference led to further

anxiety and mistrust of the British government resulting in the land demonstrations that eventually took place in 2000.

- The involvement of Provincial Governors / Resident Ministers added an unprecedented political flavor to the land redistribution program. Prior to this time, the political thrust had not been explicit and professional and technical considerations had been allowed to dictate the pace of land redistribution.
- There was an absence of an agreed policy and procedure for the fast track phase resulting in different perceptions in different provinces depending on the political thrust in the province.
- In the final analysis, all land regardless of its status was targeted for redistribution. As a result, land that had been previously been exempt from the redistribution program was brought in. This included land under Bilateral Protection Agreements.
- There was an increasing tendency for self-settlement as well as multiple ownership of land. Those with political clout took full advantage to acquire multiple farms contrary to the original objective of one man one farm.
- Initially there was limited government control over the redistribution program until government had to institute stern measures against those operating outside government instructions.

**Table 2 - Progress in Land Redistribution as at October 2002**

Resettlement phase	Families resettled	Area (ha)
1980 to 1998	71 000	3 498 444
1998 to June 2000*	4 697	144 991
Fast Track A1	160 340	7 269 936
Fast Track A2	27 854	1 680 197
Land still to be planned and allocated		1 562 454
<b>Total</b>	<b>232 738</b>	<b>14 156 022</b>

Source: Ministry of Lands Agriculture and Rural Resettlement  
Department of Land and Rural resettlement

\* The period is also referred to as the Inception phase of the Fast Track Land redistribution program

Table 3 demonstrates that the fast track phase of land redistribution was rapid compared to the earlier process. In terms of settler emplacement, the fast track phase made phenomenal progress over a short period of time compared to the earlier phase.

*The role of war Veterans during the fast track phase* - War veterans have been a distinct group since independence through the establishment of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Associations. Membership of the association comprised former combatants and serving members from the security forces. During the first phase of land redistribution, war veterans were considered as part and parcel of the landless people. They did not have a distinct quota. Events leading to the fast track phase saw war veterans emerging as the prime mover of farm demonstrations. A specific quota of 20% at all designated A1 farms was set aside for war veterans. Although there was no quota for war veterans under the A2 model, some Provincial Governors and Resident Ministers allowed such a quota.

It must be realized that up until 1998, the farms that had been acquired by government for land redistribution had mixed potential. The best farms had not yet been acquired and a lot of people eyed them. This led to the stampede for these farms where infrastructure was superb, potential was very high and the quality of

homesteads was also very high. Some of the people who stampeded to occupy land during the fast track phase did so specifically to secure good accommodation.

## ***Lessons that can be learnt from the Zimbabwe's experience in Land Redistribution***

The land redistribution program in Zimbabwe brought mixed fortunes. Some important lessons can be learnt. From a world- appreciated program of the early eighties to a world-condemned fast track program since 2000, Zimbabwe provides the perfect lessons of what not to do under a situation of bitter conflict. The early land redistribution program was hailed as a success largely because all parties played their role as envisaged. The fast track phase was different because some parties failed or were reluctant to honor their obligations. The following are some of the lessons to be learnt from Zimbabwe's experience.

1. *Proper planning is vital* - The fast track land redistribution phase was carried out against a background of inadequate planning. As a result, there was insufficient time to do proper assessments and hence

**Table 3 - Resettlement and land redistribution status (A1 and A2) since inception of the Fast Track Land reform program (February 2006)**

Province	A1 resettlement			A2 resettlement		
	No of farms	Area (ha)	Beneficiaries	No. of farms	Area (ha)	Beneficiaries
Manicaland	240	215,427	11,921	211	102,215	1,040
Mashonaland Central	340	568,197	14,939	319	259,489	2,243
Mashonaland East	446	437,269	26,027	370	314,233	4,512
Mashonaland West	772	811,033	25,501	665	873,111	4,269
Masvingo	219	750,563	26,400	166	341,000	1,160
Matabeleland North	263	520,214	8,311	142	259,659	230
Matabeleland South	226	383,140	9,839	145	288,324	574
Midlands	240	451,242	17,760	262	243,611	828
Total	2,740	4,137,085	140,698	2,280	2,681,642	14,856

Source: Ministry of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement



settlement was haphazard. The result was that a lot of plots were demarcated on marginal fragile environments. The program did not allow for proper land capability and suitability assessments. Lack of proper plans will continue to influence performance of the land redistribution program.

2. Compared to the numbers of people settled or the number of farms acquired the planning process lagged far behind. There is need to provide adequate resources for the planning process in order for planning to precede settlement. Once people are settled without proper planning, it becomes more difficult to carry out proper planning as some settlers will already have laid their stakes which are usually at variance with the intended plans.

3. *Settlement should always follow the planning phase* - It has been observed that when settlement precedes planning, it is difficult to implement plans in retrospect, no matter how good the plans are. This is because some settlers will have staked themselves and would not be willing to move. In a politically charged environment, implementation of plans in retrospect becomes almost impossible.

4. *Technical assessments should be the main basis for settlement* - Planning during the fast track phase saw minimal planning

taking place. Most demarcations were done on maps some of which were out dated. There was no time to check and verify plans on the ground. This led to numerous boundary disputes on the ground. As there were little technical assessments on the ground, the basis for settlement was variable. A lot of marginal land and fragile environments were settled. Some allocations done on maps proved difficult to implement on the ground. Unlike during the first phase of land redistribution where proper technical assessments were done, the fast track phase put people first. Correcting for proper technical assessments on the ground proved difficult in some cases as people who thought they had been allocated better land refused to give way for plan revisions.

5. *Political thrust should not override technical assessments* - The major emphasis during the fast track phase was to allocate land to as many people as possible. Politicians gave instructions as to how many people were to be accommodated on a particular farm regardless of the land capability or land suitability. Planners ended up demarcating plots that were not viable due to instructions from the provincial Governors / Resident Ministers. Only when people had been offered land was it realized that plots were not viable. This resulted in and additional

**Table 4 - Number of farms planned / re-planned by model**

Province	Farms planned	Model type	Farms re-planned	Model type
Manicaland	10	A2	2	A1
	2	A1		
Mashonaland East	5	A2	11	A2
Mashonaland Central	2	A2	3	A2
	5	A1	1	A1
Mashonaland West	1	A2	3	A2
	1	A1		
Midlands	11	A2	None	
	2	A1		
Matebeleland North	4	A2	1	A2
	2	A1		
Matebeleland South	3	A2	None	
Masvingo	None		1	A1
Total	36	A2	18	A2
	12	A1	4	A1

Source: Ministry of Lands, land reform and resettlement

administrative burden as new offer letters had to be processed and fresh demarcations had to be done. The political desire of benefiting as many people as possible proved difficult to implement at times but more often led to unviable plots.

*6. Discipline should be observed* - Some people moved from one farm to the next often leaving a trail of equipment vandalism or plunder. Those that were involved in multiple farm movements justified their actions in many ways. Either they were not happy with the infrastructure at the farm or they intended to grow crops which could not be supported by the current farm infrastructure, or the farm was too small for their intended production plan. Apart from sheer greed, the major reason for movement was in search of better homesteads or better infrastructure. There was a strong political influence. People who moved from farm to farm were politically connected. This lack of discipline had its toll on the fast track program. People who were allocated land on farms subjected to multiple occupation could not take up their plots. Conflicts often arose and delays in settlement were the norm. Some farmers though allocated land in time for the season still failed to grow crops due to this indiscipline among some elements that showed political clout.

*7. Basic infrastructure such as schools and clinics should be there prior to settlement* - The fast track land redistribution phase was not accompanied by the development and establishment of social infrastructure such as schools and clinics. Although some schools and clinics were there before, they could not cope with the large numbers of people now settled on the land. There was need for more schools and clinics. The government addressed the shortage of schools and clinics by transforming some of the homesteads into temporary schools and clinics. Due to the high demand for such social infrastructure, temporary schools and clinics still exist in resettlement areas. Absence of social infrastructure was sighted as one of the major reasons why some settlers delayed in taking up their plots as

this entailed having to run two homes that were far apart. The earlier program had been planned in such a way that development of social infrastructure moved in tandem with settlement.

*8. Binding international agreements should be respected* - Some farms had Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (BIPPAs). Although this was known to technical and professional personnel, politicians did not give it much significance. Thus a lot of farms with BIPPAs were settled. Zimbabwe is in the process of ensuring that the Bilateral Investment Protection Agreements are honored. The process of honoring BIPPAs means those settled on farms with such agreements have to be moved or the owners have to be compensated in terms of the agreements. The Government of Zimbabwe expressed its commitment to BIPPAs through the budget speech delivered by the Minister of Finance to the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

*9. Land should be preserved* - Proper land management principles and practices need to be followed. Most of the farms that were sub-divided now need conservation plans that recognize the new subdivisions. Conservation planning is essential if land is to be preserved for sustainable production. Apart from the Department of AREX which carries out conservation planning, Zimbabwe has established the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) as the watchdog for the environment in the country. EMA is currently strengthening its capacity to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments to ensure that all projects conform to the principle of land preservation. New farmers are being encouraged to construct contour ridges to reduce erosion as well as fire guards to militate against loss of flora and fauna through destruction by fire. Preservation of the ecosystems will enable production to take place in a sustainable manner. It is essential that land preservation measures be accorded top priority in order to maintain productivity potential.

10. *Land redistribution program should be well funded* - The Zimbabwe experience shows that adequate funding should be provided for activities associated with land redistribution. The financial constraints associated with the program meant that some critical activities could not be undertaken. The Government tried to fund the land redistribution program to the extent available resources could permit. Notable shortcomings include lack of vehicles to enhance mobility of planning officers, lack of finance for subsistence and travel allowances and shortages of planning materials such as paper, survey equipment, computers and other associated consumables. On average, the Ministry of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement were awarded 20% of what they had bid for on their estimates of expenditure. Government could not afford to allocate more resources as there were other competing requirements. It is the opinion of the writer that funding the land redistribution program should have been prioritized for a given number of years. This could have enhanced the implementation capacity.

## ***The future of Land Reform in Zimbabwe***

It must be accepted that the land redistribution program that took place in Zimbabwe cannot be reversed. What remains is for government to draw up a program for strategic recovery of the agricultural sector. The land redistribution program has availed land to more people in Zimbabwe than ever before. However, not all people who have accessed land are competent farmers although most of them have a passion to farm and produce crops. Many of them want to make a living from farming, but the process is an uphill battle. The Zimbabwe government can learn from what the colonialists did to develop agriculture during the colonial era. This is the time to pick up the pieces and realize the real fruits of independence.

To re-establish agriculture firmly on its feet, the following needs to be done:

1. *Define an appropriate Agricultural Policy* - The agriculture sector has changed significantly. There is need to define and adopt a new agricultural policy framework that takes into account what has happened during the land redistribution phase. A policy framework is required to capture the full potential and benefits of land reform. Previous policies are no longer relevant because the sector has undergone a major transformation. While Zimbabwe prides herself in the level of manpower availability, regrettably, there is currently no staff that can draw up a sustainable and appropriate policy. Assistance from international development partners should be sought.

2. *Strengthen Agricultural Support services* - Agricultural support services are now extremely inadequate to service the expanded agricultural sector. The government has not been spared from the brain drain that has affected the economy as a whole. Government should deliberately allocate more resources to the agricultural sector to strengthen its capacity to deliver services. There has been a tendency to marginalize the agricultural sector. If the fruits of the land redistribution program are to be enjoyed in a sustainable manner, the organizations charged with service delivery must be boosted in capacity. In particular, there is need to strengthen Agricultural Extension Services as most of the new farmers look to the Department of Agricultural Research and Extension (AREX) for assistance. New farmers need support and most of them look forward to government services for the support.

3. *Provide financial resources for agriculture* - Agriculture has been poorly funded since independence. Current efforts through the Agricultural Sector Productivity Enhancement Facility (ASPEF) through the central bank are commendable. However, the central bank cannot continue to do work that commercial banks should be doing. In the past, banks and financial institutions provided funds to commercial farmers. New

criteria for funding and new methods of defining collateral security need to be found. Agriculture cannot operate commercially without sustainable sources of finance. Banks such as The Development Bank of Zimbabwe (AGRIBANK) should play a leading role in the provision of finance to the agriculture sector.

*4. Invest or provide incentives for investment in agriculture* - The last ten years has seen very little investment going into agriculture. One reason was the uncertainty brought about by the land redistribution program; another was the fact that investment funds for the new farmers were not available. To compound the issue, a lot of infrastructure was vandalized and rendered unserviceable. Destruction of infrastructure was done by both the former commercial farmers who did not want to see the new farmers benefiting and the new settlers who destroyed infrastructure mainly out of ignorance and self enrichment. Whichever way, infrastructure that had hitherto served the agriculture sector was no longer available. Of particular concern was irrigation infrastructure which includes pumps, motors, main delivery lines, center pivot systems, irrigation pipes and sprinklers. These were, either, vandalized, stolen or simply rendered unusable. If agriculture is to be revived with some measure of sustainability, and given the droughts that are characteristic in the region, massive investment in irrigation systems is required. Alongside investment, training in proper use of irrigation systems should be given. The industry is currently import-dependent and investment towards resuscitating the irrigation equipment manufacturing industry should be made. Although some of the irrigation systems have now been restored, sustainability remains doubtful as there are insufficient spares back up.

5. New farmers should be encouraged to invest in their new acquisitions. The main reason why many farmers are not investing in the farms is due to lack of security. The

promised 99 year leases are yet to be finalized and the sooner this is done the better. New farmers, particularly A2 farmers, have the means to invest in infrastructure at their farms but are hesitant to do so due to lack of security of tenure. The Zimbabwe Infrastructure Development Bank should play a significant role in the process of restoring infrastructure in the agriculture sector.

*6. Develop and maintain a competent agricultural manpower base* - As stated earlier, the agriculture sector has not been spared from the brain drain that has swept through the country. Most of the professionals have either left the country or are still in the country but devoting their energies to better paying jobs. The net loss of trained agriculture practitioners has considerably reduced the strength of the advisory services. There are sufficient training facilities for both the diploma and degree levels at the various colleges and universities in the country. The sector has failed to maintain staff because of low remuneration levels and in some cases, poor opportunities for advancement. Manpower that has been lost to the region and to other occupations should be lured back into agriculture in order to realize the real fruits of land redistribution in Zimbabwe.

*7. Set up an appropriate legal framework that promotes agricultural development* - Since independence, major focus has been put on land acquisition. The land acquisition act occupied the center in land legislation. Now that the land acquisition is tailing off, it is essential to look into other aspects of the law that will strengthen the gains achieved so far. Presently, legal provisions for proper land management are extremely weak. Although the Environmental Management Act has been passed, and the Environmental Management Agency set up as the watchdog, land abuses are rampant. The increase in the number of farmers and the destruction of electricity infrastructure in the farms is fuelling deforestation. Zimbabwe needs an all embracing Land Act

to address current and future anticipated shortcomings. The act should instill discipline among farmers and preserve agricultural land for future posterity.

8. Most of the legislation used in agriculture was derived from the colonial era. Such legislation has not kept pace with developments in the sector and should be amended or completely overhauled. Legislation in the agriculture sector should take into account the transformation the sector has gone through.

9. *Provide security of tenure to land owners* - New farmers have expressed concern over lack of security of tenure. Some have sighted the absence of a secure tenure system as the main reason why they are not able to invest in their new farms. Government has made tremendous progress towards the development and proposed administration of 99 year leases. However, the leases are taking too long to come into implementation. Although 99 year leases were launched by His Excellency the President in 2006, a few legal hitches have since been identified. These little hitches have put a hold on further issuance of 99 year leases. Issuance of 99 year leases will go a long way in giving confidence to new farmers some of whom have waited for a long time. Issuance of 99 year leases will remove doubt and uncertainty and instill confidence among the farmers.

Efforts should now be directed towards strengthening the new situation in the agriculture sector that has been created by the land redistribution process.

## ***Conclusion***

Land redistribution in Zimbabwe took place against a background of bitter acrimony among conflicting parties. This makes the process unique. Valuable lessons have been learnt from the process which other countries can adopt. Countries like South Africa and Namibia can learn from the Zimbabwe experience as they seek to achieve equitable land redistribution. What is of greatest importance though is for the international community to recognize that the land redistribution program in Zimbabwe can no longer be reversed.

## *References and suggested reading*

Roth M and Gonese F. (eds.) (2003) *Delivering Land and Securing Rural livelihoods: Post Independence Land Reform and Resettlement in Zimbabwe*, Centre for Applied Social Science, University of Zimbabwe Land tenure Centre University of Wisconsin-Madison

Mandivamba Rukuni, Patrick Tawonezvi, Carl Eicher (eds.) with Mabel Munyuki-Hungwe and Peter Matondi *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution Revisited* (2006) University of Zimbabwe

Ministry of Economic Development (2006) national Development Priority Plan, Government of Zimbabwe

Food and Agriculture Organization (2005) *Access to Rural Land and Land Administration after violent Conflicts*, FAO Land Tenure Studies, FAO Rome

Ministry of Finance (2005) *The 2006 National Budget Statement* Government of Zimbabwe

Hutchison R. (2004) *Dorset a Survey of new settlers and their needs on a former commercial Farm in the Midlands of Zimbabwe* Independent Office Machines (2005)

Kaori Izumi (ed.) (2006) *Reclaiming our lives, HIV and AIDS women's land rights and livelihoods in Southern and East Africa* Human Sciences Research Council (2006), FAO Sub-Regional Office for Southern and East Africa

Kaori Izumi (ed.) (2006) *The Land and Property Rights of Women and Orphans in the context of HIV and AIDS Case Studies from Zimbabwe* Human Sciences Research Council (2006), FAO Sub-Regional Office for Southern and East Africa

Ministry of Lands, Land reform and Resettlement (2006) *Response to the Portfolio Committee on Lands Agriculture, Water Development, Rural Resources and Resettlement: 2006 half year Budget Performance Report* Government of Zimbabwe

Government of Zimbabwe (2004) *The Land Acquisition Act Chapter 20:10 (as amended)* Government Printers

Government of Zimbabwe (1996) *Policy Paper on Land Redistribution and Resettlement in Zimbabwe*

Ministry of lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement Department of lands and Technical Services (2002) *fast Track Land resettlement Programme (July 2000 to October 2002) progress Report*

Various (1966) *Papers presented at the Conference on The Tribal Trust Land at University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1966* Sponsored by the Natural Resources Board of Rhodesia