LAND REFORM IN ZIMBABWE: LESSONS AND PROSPECTS FROM A POVERTY ALLEVIATION PERSPECTIVE

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Poverty and land

Perhaps the greatest constraint to development in the developing countries is poverty. Lack of access to adequate food supplies, or food insecurity is generally seen as a key defining characteristic of poverty. It is now widely accepted that in most agrarian such economies lack of access to land is associated with low incomes and rural poverty. For farming populations access to land and control over land use is an important determinant of food security; for rural people in general access to land and natural resources is an environmental concern linked closely to livelihood opportunities. Land holding is one amongst other characteristics of wealth or well-being and although the ability to farm productively is a principal concern for rural people. Social networks are the basis of coping strategies for the poor and at times of seasonal stress. This is because land holding and secondary land rights are a function of social capital, embedded in social relations, specifically in networks of kinship, exchange and mutual obligation. Also, customary tenure systems afford access and usufruct rights for the poor while the very poor and the rural landless are often those unable to draw on social capital for access to land. Problems of land access for the poor are worse in areas of high population density and especially where land values are rising, associated with expanding cities and high potential market gardening areas. In lower potential rainfed farming areas, high population density is associated with land degradation and falling productivity; these factors are causes of out migration in search of land or employment elsewhere.[1]

1.2 The Extent of Poverty in Zimbabwe

In 1995 the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare conducted the Poverty Assessment Study Survey (PASS) The PASS found that:

- 61% of Zimbabwean households live below the total poverty consumption line.
- 45% households of live below the food poverty line.
- Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas with 75% of households in the total poor category compared with 39% of urban households.
- The highest incidence of poverty is in the communal lands (84% of households), followed by the resettlement areas and small-scale commercial farms (70%), large-scale commercial farms (57%), and urban areas (39%).
- Households headed by females (31% of the total) have a greater incidence of poverty than those headed by males. About 57% of female-headed households are very poor compared to 40% of male-headed households. About 72% of female-headed households fall into the combined poor and very poor category compared to 58% of male-headed households. [2]

[1] Quan, Gilling undated

[2] The survey was concentrated in a few months that coincided with the aftermath of a serious drought. The results are therefore distorted, and there are also problems with the reliability and representativeness of the data collected. The resulting estimates of the incidence of poverty are regarded by many as serious overestimates, apparently indicating that nearly two-thirds of the population is either very poor (16 per cent) or poor (46 per cent). These figures greatly exceed earlier, although more partial, estimates and should probably be discounted (Poverty Dynamics in Africa, June2000).

Poverty in Zimbabwe has its origins in three main influences:

i) A weak economic growth performance. Over the past 31 years GDP growth has averaged a little over 4% annually which, with population growth of more than 3% a, year, means that real per capita incomes have improved by only 0.8% a year.

ii) High and rising levels of unemployment, the result of both low rates of GDP growth and the capital-intensive pattern of that growth. This shows that the proportion of formal sector breadwinners in the total population fell a peak of over 17% in 1975 to just above 12% (estimated) in 1997. Consequently, dependency ratios have risen substantially (37%) from 5.9 people per formally employed worker in the mid 1960's to 8.1 people per employed worker in 1997. Without wage employment, the bulk of the population is dependent on land, but the highly inequitable pattern of land ownership along with limited access to water, credit, and technology reinforces and deepens poverty.

iii) A highly skewed pattern of income and wealth distribution largely resulting from the limited access, until the 1980s, of more than 95% of the population to education, especially at secondary and tertiary levels. While this situation has since been remedied, access to finance, but especially to land, continues to be severely constrained.[3]

It is, however, interesting that the PASS of 1995 revealed that only a small minority of people interviewed (1%) identified land shortage or poor land quality as a cause of poverty.

1.3 Stated objectives of land reform

1.3.1 Land reform and Resettlement Programme Phase 1

Within a few months of independence in 1980, Zimbabwe initiated a Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (LRRP). Included among the broad objectives of resettlement policy was enhancement of the socioeconomic well-being of low-income households.[4]

More specifically, the objectives of the programme were:

- To alleviate population pressure in the communal areas;
- To extend and improve the base for productive agriculture in the peasant farming sector;
- To improve the level of living of the largest and poorest sector of the population;
- To provide, at the lower end of the scale, opportunities for people who have no land and who are without employment and may therefore be classed as destitute;
- To bring abandoned or under-utilised land unto full production as one facet of implementing and equitable programme of land redistribution;
- To expand or improve the infrastructure of economic production; and
- To achieve national stability and progress in a country that has only recently emerged from the turmoil of war.[5]

[3] UNDP/ PRF/ IDS, 1998
[4] Kinsey, 1998
[5] Kinsey, 1999

The original criteria for the selection of beneficiaries of the resettlement programme emphasized need and gave priority to refugees and persons displaced by the war and those with no or inadequate land for subsistence. The programme was revised in 1985, to incorporate the integration of communal land reorganisation and development within the resettlement process. Emphasis shifted, targeting qualifying individual families for translocation resettlement. The programme was revised once again in 1997, following what the government described as complete failure with respect to the decongestion objective. The 1995 revision sought a resettlement programme that would critically address the issue of decongesting identified overpopulated and or overstocked villages and wards.[6]

In 1990 Zimbabwe began a five-year structural adjustment programme, precipitating high human development costs. The government cut spending on education by 30%, while real wages fell by a third and poverty rose in both urban and rural areas. In response, it turned to UNDP for assistance in formulating poverty programme - and in 1994 it adopted a Poverty Alleviation Action Plan.[7] Amazingly it was at about this time that there was, a change in the focus of the land reform exercise from a strong poverty focus. Greater focus was now placed on farming experience and competence. Specifically, the focus of the programme was articulated as:

(i) To decongest overpopulated and/or overstocked wards and villages for the generality of landless people.

(ii) To address the needs of successful peasant farmers who had limited means and resources but wanted to venture into small-scale commercial agriculture.

(iii) To address the needs of indigenous citizens who had means and resources to enter into large scale commercial agriculture.[8]

1.3.2 Land Reform and Resettlement Programme Phase 2

In 1997 the Government embarked upon the LRRP2, which expected to redistribute substantial parts of the commercial farm sector in 5 years. The objectives of the LRRP2 were to:

- To acquire five million hectares of land from the large-scale Commercial Farming Sector for redistribution.
- To resettle about 150 000 families. This included resettling youths graduating from agricultural colleges and others with demonstrable experience in agriculture, in a gender sensitive manner.
- To reduce the extent and intensity of poverty among rural families and farm workers by providing them with adequate land for agricultural use.
- To increase the contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by increasing the number of commercialized small-scale farmers using formerly underutilized land.
- To promote the environmentally sustainable utilization of land.

[6] Akroyd, 1997
[7] UNDP, 2000
[8] GoZ, 1997

- To improve conditions for sustainable peace and social stability by removing imbalances in land ownership.[9]

In September 1998, under pressure to secure funding for the second phase of its land reform programme, the government held an International Donor's Conference on Land Reform and Resettlement in Zimbabwe to mobilize support for its programme. Donors unanimously endorsed the need for land reform and resettlement in Zimbabwe and affirmed that land redistribution was essential for poverty reduction, economic growth and stability. It was agreed that an Inception Phase lasting 24 months would be implemented with immediate effect.

The Inception Phase (whose framework plan listed poverty reduction as one of its main principles) had, as its main objectives;

i) the redistribution (acquisition and resettlement) of up to 1 million hectares of land to as many beneficiaries as possible within 24 months;

ii) improvement of the pace, beneficiary participation and effectiveness of the LRRP2[10]

Distinguishing features of the Inception Phase included the participation civil society institutions in the implementation of land reform initiatives as partners to government. The 24-month period whose activities would be financially supported by donors including the United States, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands would be followed by an Expansion Phase of the LRRP2. However, financial support was conditional upon the fulfillment by the Zimbabwe government, of certain guidelines agreed at the Donors Conference. In the year that followed the Conference, the donor partners, dissatisfied with Zimbabwe's fulfillment of the agreed conditionalities, did not fulfill their pledges.

The Inception Phase thus gave way to the Fast Track Programme (FTP), largely due to the political imperatives of redistributing land. The implementation of the FTP was launched in spite of the negative experiences from the "Accelerated" programme of the 1990's. Even though there was in existence an implementation programme, the FTP was largely implemented through the widespread invasion of commercial farms by armed groups "landless" people.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER THE LAND REFORM PROGRAMME

2.1 A Market Orientation

Zimbabwe's approach to land reform has, to a large extent, been externally influenced. Hence, even though the then newly independent state was pursuing a Marxist-Leninist ideology, in 1980 the government still purchased land for redistribution at market prices as determined by the British-mediated independence settlement and Constitution. This market based approach which prevailed until the year 2000 was based on World Bank reasoning that land reform was more likely to result in poverty reduction if it was

[9] GoZ, 1999-2000
[10] GoZ, 1999-2000

implemented in accordance with the operation of existing land markets. However, the requirement to acquire land from the market has been cited by government as a bottleneck in the process.

2.2 LRRP1 Achievements

Resettlement during this first phase was carried out under two programmes:

(i) *The intensive resettlement programme*, which began in 1980 and under which 18 000 households were originally to have been resettled over three years: and

(ii) *The accelerated resettlement programme*, (during the 1990s) a more recent initiative aimed at resettling much larger numbers of families on an emergency basis. The difference between the two lay in the implementation. The intensive programme was based on detailed planning, a procedure for settler selection, large amounts of specialist inputs, and provision of a wide range of infrastructure and supporting services to serve the new communities.[11] On the other hand, the accelerated programme was more concerned with the pace of resettlement, often at the expense of preparedness.

The benefits stemming from the resettlement process have been described as enigmatic.[12] Considering the complexity involved in poverty analyses, this can be expected. Nonetheless, progress has been made over the last few years. An important contribution to the debate has come from a long-term study of economic and social adaptation among resettled households. In 1998, Kinsey reported that severe under-nutrition (an indicator of poverty), was far more serious among resettled children in drought years than among other children in Zimbabwe in normal years. However, chronic under-nutrition appeared less than in other rural areas of Zimbabwe. These results led to the following questions being asked:

- Has access to additional land thus enabled households to produce more food from year to year, but resulted in socio-economic systems that are more vulnerable to drought-induced shocks? Has additional land led to greater diversification in cropping and/or in income sources that reduce chronic under-nutrition but fail to protect against crises?

- Why does the impact of drought seem to be greater in more recently established communities in resettlement areas than in the long established ones in the communal areas of Zimbabwe?[13]

A subsequent report based on a 17-year data set collected among the first group of resettled farmers was published by Kinsey in 1999. Household welfare (incomes, asset ownership and nutritional status) among LRRP1 beneficiaries and a control group of communal farmers were compared. The study found that the early resettlement programme was successful in that land reform beneficiaries were better off (in income and asset terms) or at least as well off (if measured by nutritional status) as a group of non-resettled rural households. A weakness in the model used was subsequently identified.

[11] Kinsey, 1998 *op. cit.*
[12] Kinsey, 1998 *op. cit.*
[13] Kinsey, 1998 *op. cit.*

This was that the study had been based on a disproportionately large number of resettled farmers from a more favourable agricultural zone. This weakness was subsequently rectified through an additional study by the same author (Hoogeveen and Kinsey, *forthcoming*). This study confirmed the success of the land reform programme from the perspective of benefiting the households.

What is apparent then is that the trend in incomes over time is positive, although the large majority of the households still live below a nationally defined poverty line (which is believed to overstate the extent of poverty). The positive trend can be ascribed to more land being taken into cultivation acquisition of more cattle, and slightly higher yields. At the individual level, incomes per capita show improvement over time. Households cultivating more than one acre per capita manage, in general, to achieve incomes above the poverty line.[14]

While the studies mentioned above pointed to the fact that households that benefited from the early phases of the land reform program have greatly increased their productivity and household income, subsequent evidence from the nationally representative Income Consumption and Expenditure Surveys, (ICES) for the 1991/2 and 1995/6 seasons suggest that resettled households are among the poorest groups in the population. This has been explained by the fact that first, land reform has helped beneficiaries to increase their level of household income significantly but that this increase has not translated into gains in per-capita terms due to in-migration of family members who, in an environment characterized by negative growth in off-farm opportunities, started to depend on the income-earning opportunities in the land reform sector. Second, land reform appears to have increased beneficiaries propensity to save.[15] Both of these results illustrate that land reform has a major potential to improve productivity in the rural sector but that, without concomitant growth in income-earning opportunities in other sectors of the economy, the gains provided by land reform may soon be dissipated and not lead to sustainable improvements in welfare.[16] Of course the land reform programme has also had failed projects. Unfortunately such cases have often been considered to be the norm, casting an overall negative impression on the entire process.

There are those who question the sustainability of the LRRP1 gains. The main concern is around land use practices. While some of the LRRP1 resettlement areas exhibit good land use practices as a result of on-going extension support and training from government and international development partners such as DED, many other resettlement schemes without such support are said to have adopted less sustainable land use practices. These areas are thought to be in diminishing returns situation.

2.3 LRRP2 Achievements

2.3.1 Provision of services and infrastructure

There has been much less optimism with respect to the outcomes of the current FTP which replaced the Inception Phase of the LRRP2. It is not surprising in view of the experiences of the 1990's that the capacity of the FTP to increase production on resettled land has been questioned. The purported support for settled farmers has frequently not been in place. In fact, promises of support have been said to be unrealistic since the government has not been able to isolate specific funds.[17] That government does not have resources for

[14] Burger *et.al.,* 2000
[15] While the ICES used expenditure as the main indicator.
[16] Deininger *et. al.* 2000
[17] ZNFU, 2000

the provision of infrastructure and services has subsequently been confirmed by the appeal by government to the international community for funds to provide support for those who were settled hurriedly as part of the FTP (See Box 2).

There have also been concerns that capacity within the technical wings of the Ministry of Lands, the Department of Agricultural Extension Services (AGRITEX) and the District Development Fund (DDF), is a great deal lower than government is willing to admit.[18] This, together with the widespread non-provision of the intended basic infrastructure[19] has resulted in FTP beneficiaries finding themselves in very difficult circumstances.

2.3.2 Gender considerations

As in other countries in Africa, women in Zimbabwe form the vast majority of the rural population where poverty prevails. In addition it female headed households a much greater likelihood of being poor than do male headed households.[20] For this reason, a land reform programme that aims to reduce poverty should incorporate a greater focus on poor women. Instead there has been a weak link at between land reform and gender in Zimbabwe. Resettlement Programmes have not ordinarily incorporated gender as an integral component. Hence, at implementation level women are still marginalised with respect to their primary access to land.

Nonetheless, some progress has been made, to the extent that there is, theoretically, an acceptance of the centrality of women to agricultural production; their marginalisation in issues of land rights and the need for redress. Hence, by 1998, various policy documents exhibited government's recognition of gender as an important dimension of meaningful land reform. However, a different trend has emerged in the course of the implementation of the FTP. Gender activists in Zimbabwe have expressed serious concern with respect to the FTP, for instance;

a) the poor level of gender sensitivity of the FTP

b) lack of mention of government accountability for ensuring that women are catered for

c) vagueness regarding the involvement of civil society

Further concern has emanated from the fact that the FTP appears to present major shifts in the government's position with respect to several important aspects, such as beneficiary selection and that the FTP implementation document was not designed along the lines of the Inception Phase Framework Policy and preceding policy documents.[21] As a result there is a major concern that the gains realised under the preceding phases would be lost. This can be illustrated by considering the LRRP2:

- Selection of beneficiaries was intended to include special groups, e.g. women. This already identified the importance of women as a special group.

[18] ZNFU *op. cit.*
[19] The FTP implementation document states that the following "basic infrastructure" will be provided; opening up of access and egress roads, sinking of boreholes and deep wells, cattle dips (GoZ, 2000)
[20] UNDP/PRF/IDS *op. cit.*
[21] Chari, 2000

- NGOs were singled out (generally more aware of issues around gender relations)
- To LRRP2 documents referred to poverty alleviation (NB. 75% of the poor are women)
- Registration of interests made specific references to gender relationships
- The programme was more specific about infrastructure provision

Similarly, the Inception Phase (IP) Framework Plan made reference to:

- gender sensitivity
- stakeholder participation
- concepts of good governance
- targeting women as a special group
- training women to cater for special needs
- provided for affirmative action in certain structures
- had a whole paragraph on gender
- mainstreamed gender throughout

It has been the submission of gender activists that setting these expectations in relation to the FTP has made it clear that the FTP document which is largely silent on gender issues is not, in fact, based on the same principles as the preceding documents.[22] The FTP is expected to fair poorly in addressing rural poverty which is closely linked to the improvement in the situation of poor rural women.

2.3.3 The case of farm workers

Commercial farm worker communities have been estimated by the Central Statistical Office to constitute approximately two million people, i.e. approximately 15% of Zimbabwe's total population. The farm worker communities constitute one of the most impoverished and vulnerable groups in Zimbabwe, with limited access to food security; primary or secondary education; health services; decent shelter; water and sanitation facilities and political representation.[23] For the most part, their earnings are well below the poverty datum line and thus need to be supplemented by subsistent food production. Yet, farm workers have traditionally been disadvantaged with respect to land rights issues.[24] They have very limited access to the land (and that under insecure tenure), from which to supplement farm livelihood earnings.

During the colonial period, farm workers, most of whom were foreign-born or descended, were viewed as completely tied to white farmers and were thus ignored. When the Zimbabwean government established criteria for settler selection in their land redistribution programme just after Independence in 1980, farm workers were not a specific category.

[22] Chari, *op. cit.*
[23] FCTZ, 2001
[24] Moyo *et. al.,* 2000

A shift in the land policy in the mid to late 1980's towards more 'efficient' and 'productive' settlers led to a more explicitly negative official policy towards farm workers, who became characterized as foreigners, as unproductive, and as *persona non grata* on resettlement farms. Not surprisingly then, the wide the first phase of the land reform programme appears to have had little if any impact on poverty levels among farm worker communities.[25]

It was at the point of formulating the LRRP2 in the late 1990s that the prevailing evaluation of farm workers began to be reversed. This was the outcome of advocacy efforts by the farm workers union and other on NGOs, and academics on behalf of farm workers. The outcome is that the government now includes farm workers as a category to be resettled[26]. To what extent has this influenced farm workers' chances of benefiting from the land reform programme? Current trends indicate that there has been little improvement. One of the reasons cited for this is that there has been no clear policy and procedures for the integration of farm workers into the resettlement programme.[27]

Farm worker livelihoods have a double-edged link to resettlement. Firstly, farm workers need access to land and to *secure* land holding. At the same time farm workers' livelihoods are inextricably linked with the fate of the farm itself. Almost all of the workers' food and cash income comes from activities on the farm; their houses are on the farms; they pay relatively low or subsidised prices for foodstuffs from the farm store; and some are assisted with access to health and education services (FCTZ, 2001). A tension is apparent between the need to make farmland available for resettlement and securing the jobs and livelihoods of those poor and landless who are employed as farm workers.

In the period from July to September 2000, resettlement occurred on 45 farms in Mashonaland East, Central and West. Out of the 1,370 farm workers who had been employed on those farms, 137 of them or 10% were included in the resettlement. 1,192 other families were also resettled on the land, indicating that a slightly greater number of people lost their jobs than were resettled. By February 2001, 347 out of the 3,812 commercial farms in the three Mashonaland provinces had already been resettled (or "fast-tracked"), while an additional 738 have been designated for acquisition by the government ("gazetted"). Therefore, an estimated 43,400 farm worker households – roughly 250,000 people – will be affected by the "Fast Track" resettlement programme in these three provinces.[28]

In considering the impact of the second phase of land reform on poverty levels, caution must be exercised. At this point (mid-2001) it is simply too early for any conclusions to be drawn. After all, previous studies showed that after some time, beneficiaries were better off than they had been immediately after resettlement and that conclusions based on evaluations of land reform outcomes over short-term horizons were likely to miss many of the beneficial outcomes that emerged as communities become better organized.[29] A similar observation was made by Lebert[30] who warned that the eventual impact of South

[25] Moyo *et. al.,* 2000
[26] GoZ, 1997
[27] FWAG/ FES, 1999
[28] FCTZ *op. cit.*
[29] Kinsey, 1999 *op. cit.*
[30] 2001

Africa's land reform programme on production and livelihoods, social justice and poverty alleviation could not be determined in a few years. Nevertheless, some trends have began to emerge. Perhaps the most recent study that considers the impact of land reform on farm worker livelihood has been that by the FCTZ. The study examines the situation of farm workers on commercial farms that are affected differently by the land reform programme. The conclusions of the study are summarised in Box 1.

Box 1

The Effect of Land reform on Farm Worker Livelihoods

The way commercial farm workers are affected by the current land reform process and land occupations vary quite significantly. Based on the findings on a normally operational farm and on farms that have not been significantly affected by the land issue, farm workers were said to be reasonably food secure although their situation is still not satisfactory. They are still poor in absolute terms, and their access to services such as health and education in particular is far from satisfactory.

The worst case scenario for a commercial farm worker involves loss of employment and displacement. If this occurs, the effects on their livelihoods are multiple and extreme:

- loss of home
- loss of permanent income and secondary casual/ seasonal income from agricultural work
- loss of access to land and inputs for own crop production (affects consumption and income from sale of crops)
- loss of access to fishing grounds
- loss of access to gold-panning opportunities (on some farms)
- loss of access to subsidised foodstuffs at the farm store, and loss of credit facilities
- loss of access to education and health services (alternatives to on-farm services may either not be available at all, or may be too far and/ or too expensive to access)

There were various situations in between the baseline (normal), and worst-case extremes. The example of the "occupied, not designated" farm shows that there is a possibility for co-existence between new settlers and existing farming activities. Current government policy is to target farms, or parts of farms, which have been left idle, and the findings here would certainly suggest that this is a positive approach. In other cases where productive land is designated, there are often problems for the farm workers. As opportunities for production decrease on a farm, the farmer is likely to cut costs initially by reducing benefits (such as access to credit), then by laying off some staff, and then by reducing the number of working days for remaining workers until operations cease entirely. Concurrently, provision of on-farm services may be cut back, though the timing of such a decision appears to depend on the individual farmer.

The ability of a farm worker to replace lost income appears to depend mainly on whether (a) there are operational neighbouring farms where additional seasonal/ casual work could be sought, and (b) whether there are (still) opportunities for gold-panning or fishing on the farm. In all the cases examined, no examples were found of farm workers being able to compensate in any substantial way for lost earnings from agricultural work. Furthermore, there will inevitably be a limit to how much additional labour other commercial farms can absorb, and a limit to the capacity of services on those farms to cope with additional people. Gold-panning and fishing are both also limited, and can have negative environmental effects in terms of increased river siltation on the one hand, and over-fishing on the other.

Alternative income sources are clearly limited; land and inputs for cultivation are limited; and the availability of "free" resources such as fish and wild foods are also limited. The burden of coping with lost income, therefore, falls on expenditure. However, because "normal" income levels are already low, it does not take long before any further cutbacks impact on basic needs. In the three cases where a group of workers had lost income, they all were estimated to be consuming less than their minimum food needs, and children were also having to forego education

(FWCT, 2001)

Although the FCTZ study examined only farms where the farmer had stayed on in spite of designation and/ or occupation, an extrapolation is made to cases where the farmer decides to cease operations because of designation, occupation or simply because of the prevailing economic and political climate. Similar outcomes are envisaged.

2.3.4 Provision of Services

For some time now, it has been evident that definitions of poverty must be as all-encompassing as possible, as opposed to being restricted to income parameters. An important component of poverty that has emerged over the years is the concept of concept of 'social exclusion'. Exclusion incorporates the lack of social ties to the family, community and, more generally, to the society to which an individual belongs.[31] The concept has both economic and social dimensions. Being excluded implies that someone's opportunities to earn an income, participate in the labour market or have access to assets or access to public services are substantially curtailed.

Social exclusion denotes not only the weakening of social ties that bind individuals to their families and communities, but also exclusion from some of the most basic rights of citizenship.[32]

Box 2

Government Unable to Provide Services

"We shall not hide the fact that the Fast Track Programme has room for improvements. For example, the settlers require access roads, water supplies, schools, clinics, dip tanks, draught power, initial seeds and fertilisers, extension services, training and many more which the Government is unable to provide at present. If we get some help some of these facilities can be provided to the settlers".

Excerpt from the speech made by Foreign Affairs Minister Mudenge at the dinner held in honour of UNDP Administrator, Mr. Mark Mallock Brown (30 November, 2000).

Experiences to date indicate that from the perspective of social exclusion, the FTP has worsened the situation of many of its beneficiaries. The prevalent failure of government to provide the "basic infrastructure" can be taken as an indication of the programmes inability in the short term, to positively impact the situation of FTP recipients. It is predominantly this perception that has been responsible for many of the FTP settlers abandoning their settlements to return to their original situations.

2.3.5 Macroeconomic implications

In the early 1990s several analyses showed that the land reform programme would not have a negative impact on the country's economy[33]. These analyses were based on the assumption that land acquisition for resettlement would not target agriculturally productive land. This assumption no longer applies since the implementation of the FTP has undeniably disrupted commercial agricultural activity. The extent to which this disruption will affect the country's economy[34] is highly contested with various stakeholder

[31] Bhalla and Lapeyre 1997
[32] Barry 1998
[33] See for example Moyo, 1998
[34] which is heavily dependent on agriculture; agricultural production accounts for close to 20% of GDP and about 60% of the country's total foreign currency earnings (ZNCC, 2000)

groups using the statistics to paint the picture that furthers their own political agenda the most. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that wheat, maize and tobacco output by the commercial sector (all significant contributors to the economy) have fallen since the onset of the farm occupations. The decrease in the performance of the agricultural sector has, no doubt, contributed to the gradual decline in the GDP performance of the economy, which, in turn, ultimately influences poverty levels.

The land reform programme, and the FTP in particular, has had a negative effect on investor confidence. Together with other manifestations of lawlessness, the land occupations that characterised the FTP have, *inter alia* contributed significantly to the withdrawal of international institutions and finance from the country. The resulting slump in the economy is bound to have both immediate and medium term implications for poverty. In this case, urban poverty levels are also likely to rise as a consequence of developments in the land reform programme.

2.3.6 HIV/AIDS

The AIDS pandemic has, over the last decade emerged as one of the most significant threats to development and to development initiatives in the developing world. In Zimbabwe as in other African countries, HIV/AIDS is creating a crisis of unprecedented proportions particularly among the extended family or community systems. In this way, HIV/AIDS has implications not only for the spread of the pandemic itself, but also for the viability of rural institutions and of traditional social safety mechanisms (widow inheritance, child fosterage, etc) and resource management. As has been observed elsewhere,[35] HIV/AIDS has the potential now to exacerbate existing development problems. Hence HIV/AIDS can be expected to be associated with increased poverty, food insecurity and gender inequality.

As already mentioned, the Fast Track Programme been characterised by little or no delivery of services (health care, schools, roads, etc.). This raises the concern that as the number of those manifesting AIDS starts to grow, as it will, there are likely to be insufficient support services for these people to fall back on. In addition, since many people are likely to be resettled in areas that are not very close to their present extended families, they will have lost access to this support mechanism for the sick. This creates a poor outlook in terms of standard of living and in terms of productivity of land and thus poverty, for resettled communities. In spite of all this, there is very little open discussion of what impacts AIDS will have on resettled families and on overall productivity down the line, and no obvious plans are being made by resettlement schemes to mitigate the impacts. In view of these and other considerations, it is important to appreciate and consider the multi-sectoral complexity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in order to ensure the sustainability of poverty alleviation/land reform efforts.

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[35] Topouzis, 1998

3. LESSONS LEARNT

- The majority of the country's population is rural, whose main economic activity is agriculture. As such, resource endowment, particularly in terms of access to land, is a crucial determinant of households' capacity to feed themselves. Hence land reform is necessary to address existing inequalities in the access to land and to improve land ownership and the security of land tenure among rural communities.

- The land reform programme has had a measure of success and has been shown to have the potential to improve the livelihoods of beneficiaries and to reduce poverty levels. At the same time, the land reform programme has not fully accomplished the stated objectives because (with the exception of some of the resettlement projects of the 1980's) the focus has been merely been on giving people land without the accompanying emphasis on the resources for them to utilize the land, for instance, seed packs, chemical inputs, tools/machinery and the required extension services. Land reform gains in the area of poverty have been modest also because the land reform programme has not really maintained a focus on poverty.

- There has been insufficient development as far as legal reforms are concerned. This is evidenced by the continued insecurity of tenure, even among the most recent beneficiaries of the land reform programme and also by the continued existence of restrictive sub-division laws.
- There has been a weak link at between land reform and gender. Programmes have not ordinarily incorporated gender considerations as integral component. In view of the feminisation of poverty, land reform has, in this way, been limited in the extent to which it has attempted to alleviate poverty.
- Similarly the land reform programme has failed to make provision for farm workers communities who are both among the poorest and the most affected by land reform in the country.

4. PROSPECTS FOR LAND REFORM

4.1 Tenure Security Counts

The land reform programme has tended to focus on the redistributive aspect at the expense of tenure reform. Although the land reform programme does have an articulated tenure reform component, tenure reform has received much less emphasis than land redistribution. In fact, there prevails the school of thought in the Southern African region that international forces supportive of white farming interests have had a role in pushing tenure reform as the priority partly as a strategy of diverting attention away from the real issue of redistributive reform. In any event, while redistributive reform has a much greater political significance, the need for tenure reform is still very significant.

So little has been achieved with respect to tenure reform in Zimbabwe that the land resettlement programme continues to issue insecure, permit-based rights to its beneficiaries. The fact that government continues to ignore ownership concerns which are generally accepted to impact productivity and investment, has a negative bearing on the prospects for land reform.

4.2 Rural-Urban Links

Recent Poverty Strategy Initiative studies around the world reveal that researchers engaged in poverty analysis mostly ignore rural-urban linkages, despite their importance to understanding poverty.[36] The same can be said of Zimbabwe with respect to its land reform programme. In spite of findings that the previously unappreciated role for Zimbabwe's resettlement program can be attributed to the fact that the resources of resettlement areas are providing a safety net for those suffering from adverse economic shocks elsewhere in the country (Productivity and Equity Impacts of Land Reform: The Case of Zimbabwe, August, 2000). This is essentially draws attention to the fact the complex and multifaceted nature of poverty and the fact that no one sector on its own (for instance, land reform) can effectively eradicate it. Hence, the prospects for land reform to play a significant role in addressing poverty in Zimbabwe have much to do with the extent to which government departments and civil society institutions can stop approaching the matter in a sectoral manner to adopt a more holistic, integrated approach.

4.3 Quality of Land

One of the key land acquisition experiences over the years has been that as government has been restricted to buying land that is willingly offered for sale, government has found itself having land that is predominantly in the poorer agro-ecological zones. Studies have shown that the performance of those resettled in the better zones tend to benefit more than those resettled in the poorer zones.[37] For resettlement to have a sustainable poverty alleviation impact, land from the better agro-ecological zones must be made increasingly available for resettlement without compromising ongoing commercial production.

4.4 Farm Workers

The prospects for the land reform programme having a positive impact on the poverty levels among farm workers in Zimbabwe are limited. The tendency has been for the land redistribution aspect of social welfare on farms to be discussed as a separate political economy issue to be tackled by the government, and not as a problem for those dealing with basic welfare. Without pressure to break the back of a strong agricultural lobby and given the weak representation of farm workers, the problem remains one being raised by a few intellectuals with little mobilisation by farm workers support groups. Although this pressure is now beginning, these groups face a problem of credibility over their attempts to lobby for the rights of farm workers to be considered during land acquisition. Although concerned NGOs have focused on the compensation rights of displaced workers, much of their concern has been based on speculation over how many farm workers are likely to be displaced by the government's land reform programme. As a result, those organisations have been seen by the government as critical of land redistribution and have consequently been associated with the lobby against land reform in general.[38] Thus their basis for arguing for land for farm workers under a land rights solution to the socio-economic needs of farm workers has been complicated by the perception that they are inherently anti-land rights.

[36] UNDP, 2001
[37] See for instance, Kinsey, 1999
[38] Moyo *et. al., op cit.*

In essence, the main limitation for farm worker welfare remains their land rights. For this reason, any land distribution strategy aimed at alleviating the existing poverty and aimed at rural development should have a transformative, holistic agenda that aims to improve the welfare of farm workers beyond the piecemeal efforts of individual farmers and NGOs. [39]

4.5 The Social Factor

This is emerging as an important consideration;

> *"The extent to which any resettlement programme is able to meet its objectives largely depends on how quickly settlers begin to realise the economic potential of new areas to which they have been moved. The speed with which they are able to do this will depend in turn on how quickly new communities and institutions spring up to replace those left behind."*[40]

Accordingly more attention must be accorded to those factors that influence the development of new communities in the resettlement areas. In addition to the physical provision of service facilities already mentioned here, there are other factors that influence social cohesion among settlers. These should be identified and addressed. For instance, plot allocation has predominantly been through the drawing of lots. It is likely that communities would develop faster if members were able to select who they wanted as their neighbours.

4.6 HIV/AIDS

The Zimbabwe land reform programme as it stands almost completely ignores the existence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Clearly, a strategy that fails to acknowledge and make provision for addressing one of its most significant challenges is bound to encounter significant difficulties. So it is with HIV/AIDS and the land reform programme.

4.7 Agrarian Reform vs. Resettlement Programme

4.7.1 Provision of infrastructure and services

The current phase of the land reform programme has to date been characterised by the inability to install the stated basic infrastructure. Beyond this, the FTP has failed to provide other services such as health care and educational facilities, which, in turn, will have a significant bearing on the overall poverty levels among resettled households. These factors have contributed to the poor prospects for the current land reform programme to contribute to the alleviation of poverty. In order to improve the prospects of the land reform programme consideration must be given as to how to design or model resettlement programmes that consider the likely impact of HIV/AIDS and that therefore incorporate provisions designed to ameliorate the negative impacts of the pandemic on poverty.

4.7.2 Outstanding legal reforms

Another shortcoming of the land reform has been its slowness in addressing outstanding legal reforms. A primary example included the issue of insecurity of tenure among

[39] Moyo *et. al., op. cit.*
[40] Kinsey, 1998

resettlement beneficiaries who continue to hold, at best, permit based rights and at worst, undefined rights over their landholdings. Another example relates to the prevalence of restrictive sub-division laws which, to date, limit the options available to government in terms of partial excision of farmland.

These are but just a few examples of the consequences of a programme that has focused on the redistributive component, as opposed to pursuing an all encompassing agrarian reform programme which also addresses inadequacies in the tenure environment, in land administration (legal framework; institutional framework; arrangements for the resolution of disputes etc.) and service provision. Such an integrated approach is essential for a reform programme that can sustainably alleviate poverty.

5. WHAT CAN BE DONE / STRATEGIC OPTIONS

In spite of all the aid and development assistance that has been poured into Zimbabwe over the last twenty years *and* in spite of the implementation of land reform programmes, the incidence of poverty continues to worsen. Yet there is an intellectual appreciation of the fact that aid, technical assistance and land reform are all necessary pieces of the poverty alleviation puzzle. What then has gone wrong? What should be done differently? Some of what has gone wrong is what this paper has touched on so far. Attention should now be turned towards *what can be done differently*.

The fundamental change that must take place is that *land reform must have a greater focus on its poverty reduction objective.* This can be effected through greater emphasis on policies that benefit the poor directly, for instance, greater transparency in land allocation, increased participation of beneficiaries in decision-making processes, provision of basic services such as education, health, and other important rural infrastructure.

Strategic Option 1:

For these changes to occur, an all important policy shift must be undertaken by the government. The implementation of the Fast Track Programme in its present format must be amended immediately:

- The government should put a moratorium on any further land occupations.
- An exercise should implemented immediately to evaluate all recent allocations for compliance with the original criteria for land identification, i.e.;
  - ownership of multiple farms
  - absentee landlordism
  - nearness to communal areas
  - derelict, under utilized farms

  Any allocations not in compliance with these criteria and which negatively impact productive agricultural practices should be reversed.

Strategic Option 2:

The Inception Phase Framework Plan should be re-introduced and adopted in an appropriately amended format. Among the other original objectives, land reform under this strategy should still aim to reduce poverty through combined measures including; land and asset distribution in favour of the poor; increased incomes to enhance affordability of social services and the development of an expanded safety net through the provision of social services. As originally stated, the objectives of the land reform programme pursued initially via an appropriately amended[41] IPFP would be to:

- mobilise resources from the GoZ, Donors, NGOs and private actors for the LRRP and effectively manage these;
- facilitate stakeholder full consultation at all levels of the amended IPFP and the subsequent phase of the LRRP;
- (resuscitate and) promote improved National Land Policy formulation and implementation;
- implement and improve existing Government approaches to and resettlement for land redistribution
- test new approaches to land acquisition and resettlement in order to improve the overall LRRP strategy;
- build institutional and implementation capacity of all institutions involved in the LRRP; Government, stakeholders, non-state support agencies and donors and;
- enhance learning among all parties through effective consultation, monitoring and research.

Strategic Option 4:

The evidence clearly suggests that while land redistribution does enhance livelihoods, substantially larger magnitude gains can be realised under an agrarian reform programme that offers the support necessary to take full advantage of the land received. Under the above-mentioned framework a strategy for the delivery of necessary basic services and infrastructure should be developed by government and its identified partners (donors). This should be a viable and phased so as to be sustainable.[42]

Strategic Option 5:

As a medium to long term strategy for making more productive land and local finance available for land reform, the government should pursue more actively, arrangements for land taxation.

Strategic Option 6:

Policy amendments must be made to ensure consistency of land reform initiatives with poverty alleviation programmes. This primarily involves addressing the sectoral manner in which such programmes have, do date, been implemented.

[41] For instance, modified to accommodate any lessons learnt during the FTP

[42] Difficult decisions may need to be made concerning those resettlements that can not be developed in the next two or so years. Factors that must be considered include the food security, health and education of settlements as they await the provision of services – there are also considerations relating to the environmental impacts of such settlements over the years before extension services and monitoring services become available to them

Strategic Option 7:

A policy shift is required to expand the targeted categories of beneficiaries of land reform to all needy groups and to place emphasis on the resettlement of groups that have, to date, been marginalised, e.g. women and farm workers.

Strategic Option 8

The Zimbabwe resettlement programme must be amended to make policy provisions for considering the impact of and making provisions for the HIV/AIDS pandemic and effects on land reform initiatives.

6. THE ROLE OF DONORS

Donors have played a major role in Zimbabwe's public sector financing and development since independence. For instance, in the area of poverty reduction, the UNDP has taken an active role coordinating with government on various studies and initiatives and in stimulating dialogue and debate among the donors and the NGO community. More recently most donor agencies have withdrawn support from Zimbabwe, primarily as a manifestation of lack of confidence in the government, its politics and its economic policies.

With the benefit of hindsight, the decision by donors to withhold land reform assistance as a way of trying to influence the government is questionable. Donors now find themselves in the unenviable position of having to decide whether or not to support the FTP, which is essentially synonymous with the land invasions. The alternative that is available to them is equally unappealing; that it, to remain aloof and watch inevitable social disaster unfold as the consequences of an ill-conceived and poorly implemented FTP manifest themselves.

In view of what is at stake it would seem to make sense for donors to re-engage the process. The main options that are available are;

- Donors to re-establish relations with government and through that channel support poverty alleviation efforts through land reform initiatives.
- Donors to take on a humanitarian view to the situation and support land reform oriented poverty alleviation programmes directly, in spite of unresolved differences with the government and its policies
- Donors to identify and support local civil society institutions or groups of institutions that are actively involved in land reform initiatives and through their support to such institutions, contribute to the fight against poverty in Zimbabwe.

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