

## Land resettlement in Zimbabwe

- *The UK believes that Zimbabwe needs land reform to reduce poverty; and that the principles agreed in the 1998 Land Conference should be observed. The UK is willing to fund schemes which are focused on helping the poor and which are transparent.*
- *After Independence, the UK spent £44 million on land resettlement in Zimbabwe.*
- *The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is now planning another £5 million for resettlement projects proposed by the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).*
- *DFID is also working with Zimbabweans to reduce poverty in communal areas.*

### The issue

Zimbabwe's best agricultural land is dominated by large commercial farms, often of more than 1,000 hectares each. Some of this land is underused. Poor black families remain crowded in the communal areas, on land holdings which are often less than one hectare.

Land reform is one of several issues that any government serious about poverty reduction and sustaining rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe would need to address. The UK believes that the current land distribution does not serve Zimbabwe's development needs.

### The UK's help for resettlement

After the Lancaster House Conference, the UK supported the land reforms of the new Zimbabwe Government.

Following Independence, the UK provided £44 million (the equivalent of nearly Z\$2.7 billion at current exchange rates) for land reform. £17 million was a specific Land Resettlement Grant and £27 million was given in budgetary support to help meet the Zimbabwe Government's contribution to the resettlement programme. The Land Resettlement Grant was signed in 1981, and mostly spent by 1988, but then progress slowed in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

This resettlement programme was evaluated in 1988. The report concluded that the programme had contributed to post-war reconstruction and stability. However, the record on improving

More than one in four of the world's population live in extreme poverty. Governments worldwide have agreed to work together to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, and to other targets including universal primary education and improved healthcare. The British Government is strongly committed to these targets.

incomes in communal and resettlement areas was patchy, and some settlers, especially women, ended up in poverty.

The UK therefore decided to support new and improved resettlement schemes. After the 1981 Resettlement Grant expired in 1996, the UK Government identified new ways that the UK and other donors could support resettlement. The UK proposed to concentrate upon schemes to benefit the rural poor and with arrangements for them to be fully consulted about the scheme. It also suggested a round table conference at which the Zimbabwe Government could explain its plans, consult the people concerned and identify donor support.

### Zimbabwe Government policies

The Zimbabwe Government's new National Land Policy in 1990 recognised the need for commercial farms in the economy, but sought to speed up farm acquisition to relieve land pressure in the communal areas. During the 1990s the Government continued to reallocate some of its land to large-scale black commercial farmers under the Commercial Farm Settlement Scheme, under procedures that have not been transparent.

The 1992 Land Act enabled the Government to acquire land, to limit the size of farms, and to introduce a Land Tax. A Commission was appointed to look into land tenure. In 1996 a policy paper on land redistribution and resettlement was produced. However, in practice there was little resettlement of poor Zimbabweans in the early 1990s.

A move in November 1997 to acquire 1,471 farms was unsuccessful following legal challenges, and this proposal damaged Zimbabwe's economy.

A Land Reform and Resettlement Conference involving key domestic stakeholders and international donors was held in September 1998

under the chairmanship of Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister. The UK Government played a full part in the conference which successfully established a set of principles for land reform: transparency, respect for the law, poverty reduction, affordability and consistency with Zimbabwe's wider economic interests.

The conference agreed that there should be a first phase during which government resettlement schemes would be tried alongside schemes from the private sector and civil society. The Government published an Inception Phase document in March 1999. Progress in implementation has been slow.

In January 2000 the Government proposed an amendment to clause 57 of the draft new constitution, to allow compulsory acquisition of land without compensation. The draft constitution was rejected in a referendum in February 2000. The Government has nevertheless introduced the amendment through Parliament. There have been widespread farm invasions by war veterans.

### UK land resettlement policy from 1997

The UK Government, elected in May 1997, has given development a high profile, establishing a new Department for International Development (DFID) with its own Cabinet Minister. It has boosted the UK's spending on development and refocused development assistance firmly on the elimination of poverty.

In November 1997 Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, reaffirmed that the UK would support a programme of land reform that was part of a plan to help reduce poverty in Zimbabwe. She stressed the importance of transparency and cost-effectiveness. The UK participated in the 1998 Land Conference and welcomed its outcome, and reaffirmed its commitment to support transparent land reform

focused on the needs of the poor.

### **DFID support for land resettlement – the way forward**

The UK is not convinced that the Zimbabwe Government has a serious poverty eradication strategy, nor that it is giving priority to land reform to help the poor of Zimbabwe. The UK remains concerned about transparency in the selection of settlers and the arrangements to help resettlement.

Against this background we have decided that the best way to try to help the poor is to support land resettlement through non-government channels. DFID will work with the private sector and NGOs to do this. We will make available up to a total of £5 million (Z\$300m) over the next 3–5 years. The aim will be to improve the livelihoods of poor men, women and children in rural areas. NGOs are already submitting proposals.

In the future the UK will consider support to government land resettlement programmes if they focus on the poor and are transparent.

### **Other DFID support for poor people in rural areas in Zimbabwe**

As set out in its Country Strategy Paper for Zimbabwe, published in April 1999, DFID is committed to supporting poverty reduction programmes, particularly in rural areas where the majority of poor people live. DFID's programmes in Zimbabwe could expand rapidly if the Government develops serious policies to help the poor.

Through various rural livelihoods projects, currently worth £15.5 million (Z\$950m) million, DFID is working with the Government, the private sector and civil society to strengthen Zimbabwean institutions and support programmes which directly help poor people.

Examples include:

- DFID is giving £3.65 million (Z\$219m) to the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, supporting reforms which will mean that services are refocused on the needs of smallholder farmers. This will help it to respond to the needs of farmers in communal and resettlement areas.
- DFID is also funding water projects worth £9.65 million (Z\$579m) in poor communal areas, for example working with Rural District Councils in Binga, Bikita, Tsholotsho and Lupane to improve access to clean water and financing small dams in Masvingo province.
- Through the Agribusiness Entrepreneur Network and Training Development (AGENT) project, £0.49 million (Z\$29.4m), DFID is helping to improve access to seeds and fertiliser in communal areas.
- DFID is also helping poor farm workers through the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe.

### **Other major DFID projects**

National AIDS Co-ordination Programme support – £11.2 million (Z\$670m); capacity building for Rural District Councils – £10.67 million (Z\$630m); support for the Government's Privatisation Agency – £2.04 million (Z\$122m); assistance for management reform and vehicles for the Zimbabwe Republic Police – £14.8 million (Z\$890m). ■

