

‘LAND AS SACRIFICIAL LAMB’: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE EFFECTS OF COLONIAL AND POST-INDEPENDENT LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

In general, discourses on the sustainable land management policies are current in the developing world. In Zimbabwe, in particular, those discourses continue to gather momentum, especially in the wake of the contentious land reform, code-named, Third Chimurenga. The study examines the effects of the colonial and post-independent land management policies in Zimbabwe. The paper argues that the colonial state deliberately undertook some legislative measures concerning land management that disadvantaged Africans, in terms of the quantity and quality of the land allocated to the indigenes. In a way, this is how ‘sponsored poverty’ emerged under colonial rule. With independence in 1980, the new independent government undertook broad based programs of re-dressing the historical imbalances of land allocation. Whilst the land reform attempts, done in stages from 1980 to 2010, brought the long awaited land to the landless peasants, they heavily flawed. The paper further claims that African peasants were sacrificed on the altar of various land management policies, in both colonial and post-independent Zimbabwe. Accordingly, as part of the recommendations, the Zimbabwean government should adopt Legislative measures, as a matter of urgency, that are intended to avert the general land degradation, deforestation, and wildlife depletion. The long-term sustainability of land, as an ecological asset, will depend on sound measures that should be taken to protect it as national heritage for all Zimbabweans.

Keywords: Third *Chimurenga*; Fast Track Re-settlement; Land Management Policies; Natural Ecology; African Reserves; Sustainable Land Management.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of human beings on earth depends completely on the availability of critical resources, such as land, water, foodstuffs, and others. These key assets are derived from the natural environment. As some writers have claimed, without this natural environment, there can be neither society nor economy (Doyle & McEachern, 1998). In their quest for economic development and enjoyment of nature, people must come to terms with the tripartite reality of the limitedness of natural

resources, the carrying capacities of ecosystems, and the needs of future generations. Today, these have to be considered as vital factors in any program that concerns sustainable development in all communities.

Today, discourses on the sustainable land management policies are so critical, especially in the developing world. It is critical in view of the fact that land degradation is now regarded as the world's most urgent problem, only after the scourge of HIV and AIDS. As some scholars have estimated, about 35% of the earth's surface is threatened by land degradation (Dalelo, 2001). It must be noted that in the developing countries, land degradation has already been designated as 'the most immediate and urgent problem' (UNESCO, 1977). In Zimbabwe, in particular, the discourses on sustainable land management policies continue to gather momentum, especially in the wake of the contemporary land reform program, popularly known as, *Third Chimurenga* (fast track land distribution and restoration) that began in February 2000. The fortitude of the discourses is concisely captured, thus '...we have squandered the earth's wealth to meet our needs without regard for other living creatures or for generations still to come' (Dalelo, 2001). This study explores the trajectory of the contentious land issue, which has largely disadvantaged and abused the indigenous Zimbabweans by evaluating both the colonial and post-independent land management policies. In the light of the effects of those policies, the study argues that land, as a natural resource, has been mishandled by both the colonial state and the post-independent state. Accordingly, land, as a national asset, was literally taken as a 'sacrificial lamb' because the majority of the Africans did not benefit from the successive land reforms that were undertaken for much of the colonial period and even in independent Zimbabwe. As will be highlighted in this paper, the colonial land policies, like the Land Apportionment Act (1930), for instance, created conditions that led to severe land degradation in almost all rural communities (then, known as Tribal Trust Lands (T.T.Ls)) throughout the country. In fact, the carrying capacity of the land allocated to the local Africans was, by far, exceeded by the millions of peasants and their animals that lived in the crowded poor reserves.

As a number of writers have observed, Zimbabwe has a long history of experiencing varied land management measures. Colonial Zimbabwe was characterized by irrational land distribution inequalities. For example, a minority white commercial community owned 51% of the total arable land in the country, whilst the majority of African peasants owned about 22% (Moyana, 2002). The ripple effect of this historical imbalance necessarily caused disparities in population densities and related environmental problems, as witnessed in most of the re-settled areas in Masvingo and Midlands provinces. Population growth is known to be the major cause of environmental stress. There has been an over-exploitation of natural resources and mainly land during the colonial period, yet land is central to ecological management. Whitlow (1988) found a direct correlation between increases in population density and increases in the extent of soil erosion. This relationship is valid for both the communal and re-settled land areas where soil erosion is now observed to be severe in Zimbabwe. In fact, the paper asserts that human poverty and environmental degradation are intrinsically linked in a self-destructive cycle. It must be noted that degraded natural environments produce less, in terms of sustainable agricultural output, and make people become more vulnerable to natural hazards, such as droughts and floods (State of Zimbabwe's Environment, 1989).

The primary symptoms of the problems of land degradation and its possible causes are related to the increasing population pressure on land resources. The result has been the loss of the value of land due to soil erosion and extensive deforestation.

This condition has been man-made in Zimbabwe. It is man-made because peasants deliberately cleared land for cultivation, overgrew crops in areas that could not support them, and, worse, overstock their communities. It must be mentioned that at the moment, land degradation, due to soil erosion, lost ecological habitat, and its biodiversity are having devastating effects in rural communities across the country. This is threatening not only the quality of life, but also life itself. For example, in some parts of Zimbabwe, it is estimated that 100 tons of topsoil per hectare is lost a year due to unsound land use practices (Manjengwa and Stiles, 2000). Therefore, if care on land management is not undertaken with a sense of urgency, Zimbabwe will be the next Ethiopia, an East African country that is repeatedly vulnerable to starvation because her farming land is no longer productive. In Ethiopia, farming land was overworked, but without sound management measures. Even the undulating productive hillsides have been reduced to bare rocks. This has been due almost entirely to over cultivation, overgrazing, and deforestation. In 1973, for example, 200,000 ordinary Ethiopians died of starvation. The main cause was cited as drought and, of course, was worsened by the loss of productive farming land (Beddis, 1994)

In post-independent Zimbabwe, despite the well-intentioned land reform program, through the re-settlement areas that were established in the 1980s, the land management policies have not been deep-seated to transform the lives of the historically disadvantaged rural peasants. The rural communal lands, such as those in Masvingo and Matabeleland provinces, are fast succumbing to desertification. Much of the western half of Zimbabwe's land is slowly being affected by the Namib Desert that is encroaching through Botswana. In addition, despite the current land reform under the *Third Chimurenga*, which began in 2000, millions of local people are still 'sacrificed on the altar'. It is well documented that the current land reform in Zimbabwe has been contentious and helped to send shockwaves across the world. It must be pointed out that the major criticism on the *Third Chimurenga* is that a few people have hoarded prime land at the expense of several peasants, who are still landless in Zimbabwe. This scenario is threatening the sustainability of land utility for the present and future generations of Zimbabweans. The study, therefore, will recommend measures that will help to 'arrest' land mismanagement as it is currently manifesting through massive man-made deforestation, land degradation, and depletion of wildlife throughout the country.

AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The focus of the study is to investigate the land management policies in both the colonial and post-independent Zimbabwe. Accordingly, two main aims were identified. The first aim of the study was to show the effects of the land management policies on peasants in Zimbabwe that were undertaken by both the colonial state and the post-independent state. To test this aim, the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Land Husbandry Act (1951) are picked up in the study to represent colonial land management measures. Furthermore, the study also picked up the re-settlement models of the 1980s and the controversial *Third Chimurenga* of the 2000s, the two types of land reform that represent post-independent land management measures. The second aim of the study was to assess the sustainability of decisions and practices, and how these affect present and future generations in Zimbabwe. This objective constituted as the basis of the recommendations that the study has conceived and suggested.

In terms of methodology, fieldwork was conducted in the two provinces of Masvingo and Midlands, in which participant observations, interviews, and questionnaires were conducted between September 2009 and September 2010. In particular, a sample of interviews was done with Agricultural Extension Field Officers, National Parks Officers, re-settled new farmers, and traditional leaders in these said provinces. The purpose was to assess their views on the causes of land degradation and thereby interpret and explain what they thought could be the remedy of land mismanagement and its degradation in Zimbabwe, as a whole. The participant observation method was essential towards seeing and hearing things, rather than relying on subjects and self-recording responses to questions or statements (McMillan & Schumacher, 1984). Critical observations and reflection were done on a wide scale when evaluating land degradation, deterioration of feeder-roads in farmlands, and unfriendly methods as practiced by *varimi vatsva* (the new black farmers). This approach yielded primary data that was relevant for the study. The study also benefited from data drawn from a consultation of books, journals, newspapers, and official government reports that reflected the colonial and post-independent periods under study.

COLONIAL POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECTS

The history of land impoverishment in Zimbabwe goes back to the colonial period. Faced with the problem of labor shortages, the Rhodesian colonial government decided to expropriate land from the Africans. Africans, then, had unlimited access to land and so they could make do with the proceeds from it. Therefore, the majority of the local Africans saw no sense in selling their labor power to the white capitalists. This partly explained the acute labor shortage in the firms in towns and commercial farms in the early days of colonial rule. As one Zimbabwean economic historian argues, colonial government decided to create artificial poverty among the local African population so that the latter could be forced to look for employment in the industries and white farming areas (Moyana, 2002). This would become possible after Africans had been dispossessed of their prime land as the chief means of agricultural production. It is within this historical background that African Tribal Trust Lands (T.T.Ls) were created throughout the country. The T.T.Ls were, in reality, reserves for cheap African labor. The creation of these African reserves was done with the help of a legal framework known as the Land Apportionment Act that was put into place in 1930. In passing the Land Apportionment Act (1930), the colonial government hoped to meet two main objectives. The first was that the colonial government wanted to curtail the random mobility of local Africans in the communal areas. It must be mentioned that after 1930, the Africans were allowed to move to mines, commercial farms, and towns only for the purpose of getting money to pay taxes. There were various forms of taxation on which Africans under colonial rule were levied, among them included cattle tax, hut tax, head tax, dip tank tax, and dog tax (Haisa, 2010). Secondly, the colonial government wanted to end the traditional land tenure system so as to introduce the individual ownership system. The latter white farming system was anchored on the ethic and spirit of western capitalism. It was this Land Apportionment Act (1930) that ushered in a new paradigm of agricultural production in colonial Zimbabwe. Agricultural land was suddenly divided along the lines of *white production areas* for commercial purpose versus *peasant production areas* for purpose of mere communal subsistence. But, as much as it could be said, peasant agricultural production was cumbersome and it did not benefit Africans. The reserves were located in the dry communal areas that were stony and rugged. It must be admitted that whilst irrigation agriculture was possible, Africans did not have the required technology for it. Worse, Africans lacked sound farming methods and were not beneficiaries of colonial state incentives, for instance, in the form of financial loans needed to boost productivity in the poor reserves. This is how Africans were sacrificed

on the altar of the colonial land management policies. The Land Apportionment Act (1930) led to ‘sponsored poverty’ upon Africans. The white settlers only formed a tiny population in 1930, but they were allocated a big chunk of prime land by the colonial government. The statistics below attempt to highlight the extent to which the Land Apportionment Act (1930) disadvantaged Africans in colonial Zimbabwe.

Table 1: Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Allocation of Land in Zimbabwe

Category	Land (in hectares)	% Of the Country
European	49. 149. 174	51
African Reserves	21. 127. 040	22
Unassigned	17.793 300	18.5
African Purchase Area	74 64. 566	7.8
Forest Area	590. 500	0.6
Undetermined	88 540	0.1
Total	96. 213. 120	100

Source: Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee, 2003.

Despite the fact that the African population in 1930 was estimated at 1,081,000, while that of the white was less than 50,000, the Land Apportionment Act allocated 51% of land to the whites and gave only 29.8% to the Africans (Moyana, 2002). It was clear that the formulation of this land management policy was dictated more by colonial economic considerations rather than by considerations on sustainable land utilization in the reserves. Evidently, the Land Apportionment Act (1930) had far reaching consequences for the sacrificed Africans. As has been observed in this study, overpopulation, overgrazing, siltation, and the drying of springs were some of the direct results. In view of these effects, one former Land Development Officer in the Native Agriculture Development was provoked to remark that “the majority of arable areas in reserves are already so eroded and exhausted of fertility that nothing short of a 12 to 15 year rest to grass will restore them to a state of structure and fertility, which would enable economic crop production to commence”. (Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee, 2003)

In the African reserves, two factors were particularly responsible for the deterioration of the soil. In the first place, there was the overstocking in the reserves. The presence of large numbers of animals in the reserves culminated in the removal of the vegetation cover. Overstocking creates overgrazing. In ecological terms, once grass and shrubs that normally provide the buffer surface for the soil are depleted, and then the topsoil is exposed to the agents of erosion, namely wind and running water (Thompson, 1945). When this happens over time, and unless mechanized inputs are applied, soil is rendered infertile and agriculture production dwindles. This is what is obtained in the rest of the communal areas under colonial Zimbabwe.

In the second place, man himself was another culprit that led to the infertility of soils in the reserves. The inappropriate methods of farming in the African reserves has made peasant agricultural production burdensome. Africans who were forced to live in the reserves cut down trees for the building of their homesteads. In addition, trees were also cut down in order to get *huni*, that is, firewood. *Huni* is the main source of domestic energy for Africans in rural areas in Zimbabwe. The result was that the landscape was left naked and at the mercy of the agents of erosion due to this man-made over exploitation of trees in the community neighborhoods (Jakarazi, 2010). The net effect of the impoverishment in the reserves was a decline in agricultural productivity. Moyana (2002) points out that before the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930, Africans had the tendency to produce more yields in grains and kept more domestic animals by themselves. But twenty years later, when the effects of the racial land management measures were commonly being felt by Africans, the tendency overturned. The colonial government however, perceived soil erosion in the African reserves as a natural product of the destructive nature of the peasant farming methods. For example, one native commissioner remarked, “the native is rarely alive to the importance of conserving the soil” (Mitchel, 1939). The colonial government deliberately singled out shifting cultivation and overstocking of animals as the causes of soil erosion. Whereas this was valid, however, it should be pointed out that these two causes were as a direct response to the colonial land management policy that was indifferent to pragmatic land use practices for Africans.

Realizing that the Land Apportionment Act (1930) was causing an ecological disaster in the African reserves, the colonial government came up with other measures intended to contain the deteriorating economic situation in the country. This is how the Land Husbandry Act of 1951 enacted. Through this Land Husbandry Act (1951), the colonial government envisioned to achieve the following objectives: to provide good husbandry farming for Africans, to encourage Africans to protect natural resources in their communities, to provide the security of tenure to the effective peasant farmer, and to limit the number of animal stocks in reserves within their carrying capacities (Pendered & Memerty, 1955). Although immediately after the Land Husbandry Act (1951) agricultural production increased in the long run, the pressure of overstocking of animals and overpopulation created problems. The individual plots of land were divided and subdivided to meet the increasing demand for land by Africans in rural communities. In our evaluation, the Land Husbandry Act (1951) was a ‘cosmetic’ arrangement because it did not provide practical solutions to the problems that were caused by the previous Land Apportionment Act (1930). This colonial land policy was a desperate measure because it merely paper-covered the cracks in order to stifle African opposition in the communal areas. De-stocking and giving individual plots to people within the boundaries of the Land Apportionment Act did not increase land that could have ameliorated the dire economic situation in the African reserves. What Africans needed was extra land in order to deal with existential issue of poverty due to land degradation and landlessness. These two conditions were salient features of the African reserves. Therefore, since the colonial government was not prepared to provide adequate land to the Africans, the reserves remained congested. In order to sustain themselves, Africans resorted to subdividing their plots, growing crops on contour ridges, and practicing stream bank cultivation. Some portions of land that was previously earmarked for the grazing of animals were eventually turned into agrarian fields. But this did not reach anywhere near to satisfy African demand for arable land. In part, this also explains why the reserves were a seedbed of African nationalism and thereby making the land issues a major reason for the outbreak of the second *Chimurenga* (armed struggle) after 1965. That was the situation in the African reserves at Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980.

POST-INDEPENDENT POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECTS

From the start in 1980, the new independent Zimbabwean government undertook a broad based program of considerable land re-settlement reform program. This program was done in two phases. The first phase took place from 1980 to 1990. The government resettled about 71,000 families on 3,498,400 hectares of land acquired from the large-scale commercial farming sector (Mangezi, 2010). The objective of the land redistribution reform was to re-dress the historical land imbalances that had been created by the prejudicial land management policies of the colonial era. The goal was to attain equality and equity with respect to access of land as a national resource. As Banana (1982) rightly observed, conflict over land was not because of its shortage, but its racial alienation. Under this earliest program of land reform, each landless family household was allocated five hectares of arable land and a grazing land portion to accommodate five herds of cattle (Kanda, 2010). The implications were that in planning this model, elements of natural resources were considered and an environmental awareness exercise was launched to educate the beneficiaries of land reform. This early phase of reform also drew new black farmers from the ranks of the master-farmer certificate holders of the colonial era. In spite of the well-meaning attempts to give land to the landless peasants by the independent Zimbabwean government from 1980, not much has changed in the communal areas. Some communal areas (formerly called African reserves) are still congested and suffered from land degradation (Makomeke, 2010). It was largely due to the fact that the Lancaster House Constitution (1979) had some limitations that affected the post independent government in its bid to fully redistribute land to the landless people. For example, its clause on willing-seller and willing-buyer as the process of land acquisition from the white commercial farmers to black hands effectively limited the availability of arable land for nationwide resettlement. In addition, despite the fact that this early post-independent land management policy was theoretically well planned, it was associated with deep-seated defects. For instance, several black farmers who were re-settled did not receive any basic training on sound agricultural production before the implementation of the program. This was worsened by the fact that there was also no financial backup for the peasants (Makwara, 2010). This is why, in this study, we claim that Africans were sacrificed on the altar of the land management policies.

The second phase of the land reform in post-independent Zimbabwe began from 1990 to 1997. Already, Zimbabwe was suffering from the impact of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) of 1992. So, land reform was conceived as a solution to the problems of ESAP. The objective of the second phase of land reform was to acquire five million more hectares of land to re-settle about 150,000 family units across the country. The individual beneficiaries were mostly drawn from the youths, graduates from agricultural colleges, and any other black farmers with practical experience in agricultural production. The second phase of land reform was implemented in the spirit of the same policy context of the first phase of land reform of the 1980s.

Nevertheless, the period from 1980 to 1997 saw the Zimbabwean Government acquiring nine million hectares of land to resettle about 221,000 family households. Since that time, the land reform program has developed to greater magnitude. However, it has developed with associated environmental problems. The main challenges have been land degradation and soil erosion. These are major factors in the decrease of agricultural production in Zimbabwe. It must be born in mind that environmental preservation is the key to sustainable agriculture. When people lack adequate financial resources, they often

have little choice but take what they can from the natural environment. As one gold panner has exclaimed, “I can’t help it if future generations find rivers silted. People are more important than the environment” (Chimusoro, 2010). Zimbabwe’s Ministry of the Environment and Tourism acknowledges that massive land degradation in the rural resettlement areas is a major threat to the implementation of the integrated conservation plan (Nhema cited in the *Daily News*, 2010). A study by Otzen and Gumbo cited in *The State of Zimbabwe’s Environment* (1989) has identified inappropriate tillage practices, insufficient application of organic material, deforestation, overgrazing due to overstocking, and cultivation of marginal areas as major causes of land degradation in communal and resettlement areas in Zimbabwe. Whitlow (1988) further found out that 1,848,000 hectares of land in all agro-ecological regions are eroded. An average of 76 tons of soil was lost per hectare through soil erosion. As stated below, Stocking (1986) has made computations and came up with the following average rates of soil loss for all agricultural lands in Zimbabwe.

Table 2: Rate of Soil Loss

Type of land	Rate of soil loss (per hectare per year)
Agricultural grazing lands	3 tones
Communal grazing lands	75 tones
Commercial arable lands	15 tones
Communal arable lands	50 tones

The above table shows the level of impoverishment that goes on largely in the communal lands. It is in those communal lands that the post-independent government has sacrificed Africans as well. Yet, it not be forgotten to realize that it is the land issue that sparked the armed struggle (*Chimurenga*) in Zimbabwe. Conscious of this historical land question, the government launched the contentious land reform in February 2000. This contemporary land reform and code-named, *Third Chimurenga* (fast-track land re-settlement), is contentious both inside and internationally (Manatsa, 2010). The government spelled out the three-fold objectives of the Third Chimurenga as: to relieve pressure on the overpopulated communal lands, to provide a means of livelihood for the unemployed landless people, and to make under-utilized land productive.

Unlike the previous land reform programs of the period between 1980 and 1997, the Third *Chimurenga* was unsystematic. It came as a surprise even to some high-ranking government officials themselves. The current land reform program, which began in February 2000, is a fundamental departure from previous philosophy, practices, and procedures of acquiring land and re-settling people. Its key mechanics were speeding up acquisition of five million hectares of land, accelerating planning, and rushing the demarcation of acquired land. There was sudden white settler replacement by *varimi vatsva* (the new black farmers) in the former commercial farms in all the provinces across the country.

Table 3: Number of Acquired white farms by December 2003

Province	No. of farms acquired	Hectarage
Midlands	791	997 213
Masvingo	649	2 662 147
Matabeleland South	397	2 191 211
Matabeleland North	481	1 405 709
Mashonaland East	912	1 108 943
Mashonaland West	1 792	1 162 508
Mashonaland Central	778	756 664
Manicaland	622	554 713
Total	6422	10 839 108

Source: Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee, 2003.

This massive land acquisition meant that there was a substantial movement of people from communal areas into the former white commercial farms. However, the process was not done for agro-economic considerations, per se, but rather for political reasons. From the ZANU (PF) vantage point, the idea was to re-settle as many peasants as possible in preparation for future elections since President Mugabe's national referendum on the new Constitution had failed to sail through an angry electorate. The ZANU (PF) government had to please, as many would-be supporters in the forthcoming elections as possible. Therefore, proper land use planning was sacrificed from an environmental point of view. To say that land reform after 2000 was a result of spontaneous expression of mass anger by the landless people is a false opinion. It must be noted that the peasants had endured without land for more than twenty years after independence, but did not invade white commercial farms at all (Ndambani, 2010). The Third *Chimurenga* on land reform after 2000 was not a revolution from below. The study contends that the contentious Third *Chimurenga* is the product of crises surrounding the economic meltdown, social decay, and political governance in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the ZANU (PF) government recklessly spearheaded the land invasions as a political ploy to win a disgruntled electorate. This is how the Third *Chimurenga* continues to be perceived as a revolution from above since it has benefited the ruling elite by sacrificing the peasants on the altar of piecemeal reforms. On the ground, the sober truth is that the landless peasants continue to be landless in Zimbabwe (Tirivanhu, 2010).

In the light of the ten years that this Third *Chimurenga* has taken (2000-2010), an objective appraisal can be offered. It was already mentioned that this Fast Track Land re-settlement came from critical political and economic problems affecting the country, but that the ZANU (PF) government could not provide lucid answers for. This inability was seen in the increase in the cost of living, skyrocketing inflation, increase in mass unemployment, empty shelves in supermarkets, political lawlessness, and international sanctions. The 'Zimbabwean crisis' was worsened by government's decision to give each of the registered liberation war veterans a Z\$50,000.00 pension payout plus Z\$2,000.00 as a monthly stipend. The deal was a

desperate measure to pacifying the war veterans who were protesting over the ZANU (PF) government's failure to meet their basic employment and survival needs and so it overstretched the national budget (Nhari, 2010). Furthermore, the country's participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war weakened the economy further. In the eyes of the majority of the people, the ZANU (PF) government was guilty of economic mismanagement for much of the period after 2000, until the formation of Inclusive Government in February 2009.

While the country was reeling under the Zanu PF induced economic problems, there emerged a vibrant political party The Movement for the Democratic Change (MDC). It promised to revive the economy, a promise that Zanu PF could not give. The MDC stole the limelight from Zanu PF, as people saw hope and survival in the MDC-led government. To make matters worse, people rejected the draft constitution in a referendum held in February 2000. The people's rejection of the draft constitution was a bad omen. Faced with a possible electoral defeat, Zanu PF had to improvise. It mobilized war veterans, the army, police, and peasants to invade farms. Political survival was at stake (Sithole, 2010). Therefore, policy and procedure were circumvented for the sake of winning the impending 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections, respectively. The Fast Track Resettlement complemented and completed a process of land mismanagement that begun in the colonial period. The Land Apportionment Act (1930) and its 'daughter', the Land Husbandry Act (1951), had set in motion a process that undermined land productivity in the African reserves across the country. The Fast Track Land resettlement, on the other hand, has also wrecked havoc in the former white owned commercial farms. That the country has been facing food deficits since 2000 is no coincidence. For example, since 2001, food production (maize, wheat, and small grains) has dropped by over 50% countrywide (Changing Times, 2010). Zanu PF party attributes the food insecurity to factors like drought and local and foreign currency sabotage. While the Zanu PF's argument has at least some credibility, the main answer is found in the collapse of commercial farming and the destruction of land resources in the commercial farms (Tirivanhu, 2010). These are no longer recipes for sustainable development in Zimbabwe. Therefore, there is all the justification to argue that both colonial and post-colonial governments sacrificed Africans for political expediency. The old adage that the current generation of people is not the last to inherit the earth, but is holding in trust for the next generation of children, has failed to make sense to two sets of regimes in Zimbabwe. Instead, it is seen that land, as a national asset, was alienated. In each of the acquired white farms, anywhere in the country, there was deforestation of woodlands, stream bank cultivation, squatting on newly acquired land, poor layout of arable lands, creation of foot and cattle paths, destruction of game, overstocking, road destruction, bush encroachment and veld fires (Madanhi, 2010). All these are common problems that threaten natural resources in Zimbabwe today. For instance, veld fires, which are believed to have been caused by *varimi vatsva* (new black farmers), were responsible for the destruction of about 10,000 hectares of re-settled land in the Midlands province (Midlands Observer, 2000).

The fast track land resettlement has seen massive destruction of woodlands, cutting of trees to build homesteads, erect cattle kraals and gardens, open arable fields, mould bricks and construct fences that scare away wild animals. Exposure of land to bare surface leads to soil erosion. This is Zimbabwe's devastating environmental disaster as fertile topsoil is lost to greater magnitude and, yet, its fortified productivity would have contributed to the African's health and wealth, instead the soil becomes silted. Deforestation continues and is exacerbated by electricity shortage in Zimbabwe today. Most families, even in

towns, seek firewood as a source of energy. There is considerable cutting down of trees in resettlement areas for sale in the urban areas (Report on Presidential Land Review Committee, 2003). In addition to deforestation, stream bank cultivation is rife; farmers continue to flout the law that stipulates that cultivation must be done after a distance of 30 meters from the stream banks, mountain slopes, and valleys. In the year 2000, due to the land reform, ownership of most small dams changed as many families were re-settled in the catchment areas. Activities such as cutting down trees for firewood, molding bricks by new farmers, and increasing the stocking rate as new farmers brought in more livestock results in overgrazing and stream bank cultivation (Chihombori, 2007).

Poor layout of arable lands, such as demarcating land without leaving access roads, encourages farmers to use waterways as roads. This often leads to serious soil erosion and gullies. Poor roads are more destructive as they become a source of erosion. The soil or sand waste from a road way either lodges or chokes the drain or is washed down to the seas. Enormous gullies have become common sites in newly resettled lands and yet public authorities of the local government are paying little attention to the environmental problems (Dhlamini, 2010). It should be borne in mind that farm roads are an integral part to good soil conservation and new farmers could take advantage of a good road network left by white farmers to conserve soils. Paths, whether by livestock or humans, have become fruitful causes of erosion. They are used until they form gullies and later abandoned for new paths. Cattle tracks to different stock pens and watering places are serious erosion hazards (Chikwenhure, 2010) In addition to these tracks, many new farmers brought in a lot of livestock into smallholdings without consideration of the carrying capacity of the land, type of soil, and type of vegetation.

In addition, veld fires in the newly acquired farming areas are a common problem during the dry season. Veld fires are frequently caused by black farmers trying to burn down trees on arable land in order to hunt down wild animals (Virukai, 2009). But this destroys the natural ecosystem and its biodiversity of flora and fauna. Biodiversity of species allows maintenance of ecological stability and its reduction, which results in weakened ecosystems. The root causes of biodiversity losses lie in the growing human population, the way in which people have appropriated more of the country's ecological productivity and unsustainable consumption of natural resources (Chenje, 1989 cited in *The State of Zimbabwe's Environment*, 1989).

As part of the study findings, mining in re-settlement areas is becoming problematic. Extensive panning of minerals, like gold and diamonds, is a major cause of river and reservoir siltation problems in many parts of the country now. For instance, evidence of heavy siltation in the Midlands province is widespread in such rivers, like Sebakwe, Muzvezve, and Munyati. The same scenario was also reported to be obtaining in such rivers like Runde, Save, and Mutirikwi in the Masvingo province. This random gold panning leads to land degradation and endangers both people and livestock (Report on Presidential Land Review Committee, 2003). Re-settled farmers have attracted criticism for taking part in unlawful gold panning at the expense of farming when land was parceled to them. Due to the lack of enthusiasm in farming by the re-settled farmers, the Governor of Midlands province, Cephass Musipa angrily remarked that "we re-settled people to farm, not to engage in gold panning" (Midlands Observer, 2000). There is a hive of activity in search of alluvial gold, especially in view of the sizzling Zimbabwean economy today. The activities are threats to the environment as pits are left uncovered, posing a

great danger to animals and promoting environmental degradation. Aquatic life is also under threat due to continuous use of harmful chemicals, like sulphuric acid, borax, and cyanide. These chemicals are used in the processing of alluvial gold (Midlands Observer, 2001). There is evidence of land degradation on re-settled farms and that of the catchment areas of major dams, such as Mutirikwi, Manyuchi, Mushandike, Siya, and Bangala in the Masvingo province. In fact, the Masvingo province has had the highest siltation rate in the country between 1985 and 2000. The degree of siltation varies considerably depending on the condition of the catchment area with more siltation of dams in communal areas.

Another negative effect of the land reform program has been the loss of game through poaching (Report on Presidential Land Review Committee, 2003). This was partly because land, or rather former white ranches, were invaded and the newly re-settled black farmers are bent on endless poaching of wildlife (Tirivanhu, 2010). Before the land reform exercise in 2000, Natural Parks and Forestry Areas covered 14.5% of the natural territory, 972,000 hectares of indigenous forest, and 4.7 million hectares of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves, game parks, aquatic regions, and cultural and historical monuments. Majority of these have been lost. The Masvingo province had the largest tracks of land under wild life management on designated conservancies, such as Save River Valley, Chiredzi River Ranch, and parts of Bubiya Conservancies. Black settlers cultivated crops in dry areas not suitable for crop production solely to justify the way they have invaded those conservancies. For instance, a long-standing dispute has emerged between Ndali people of Chiredzi and Gonarezhou National Park, where they occupy about 16,000 hectares and cultivate crops in this park. The loss of conservancies to the black invaders has been enormous in terms of the ecological preservation of the natural biodiversity and cultural heritage. Wildlife in Zimbabwe has been progressively endangered through over-exploitation, poor management, and sheer lack of technical knowledge of new black farmers on animal husbandry (Mabwe, 2010).

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has shown that the land mismanagement was a brainchild of the colonial government and has been fostered by the post-colonial government in Zimbabwe. The colonial government accepted crowded and squalid conditions to prevail in the African reserves as a means to force Africans to look for employment, mostly on the white farms and mines. On the other hand, the post-independent government showed no commitment to curbing land mismanagement in the former white farms either. The reason for adopting an attitude that abused its citizens has been political expediency on the part of the government, particularly after 2000. The ZANU (PF) government got political mileage over its perceived political rivals, mainly the MDC opposition party. The latter political party has been in ascendancy in the political landscape by exploiting the deepening crises that the country has been experiencing. Yet, critical analysis has revealed that the land management policies of both regimes were basically the same. As much as we can tell, both regimes sacrificed Africans on the altar of piecemeal land reforms because they wanted to hold onto the pinnacles of political power. The effect of abusing the people was noticeable in the reduction of food production levels. For example, in the years after the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Land Husbandry Act (1951), there was a marked decrease in food production among the African peasants in reserves. In our day, unprecedented high levels of food shortages and hunger in Zimbabwe have also followed the current fast track land re-settlement program. In our evaluation, it seems that the post-independent government has been more reckless in abusing its landless citizens than its predecessor.

It is against the this backdrop that a call for comprehensive policies is therefore urgently required to ensure sustainability in the exploitation of the natural resources that Zimbabwe is endowed with. An actionable environmental education awareness package that is backed by a master plan for environmental protection and that engages all interested stakeholders in its formulation and execution be launched. The stakeholders are envisioned to include Traditional Leaders, Re-settlement Officers, Agricultural Extension Officers, Political Leadership, and ordinary farmers at all levels across Zimbabwe. Such a perceived advocacy is urgent and bearing in mind that the capacity of the earth to support human life is limited (UNESCO, 1977). Any environmental education should provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment. It is against this background that farmers be advised along major farming systems. Land use systems must be both ecologically sustainable and economically viable. Out of this conviction, therefore, the study proposes five recommendations that logically reflect the four main branches of land management *visa vis*: food cropping, forestry, livestock rearing, and wildlife ranching. These are crucial principles that must guide any land management policy formulation.

Firstly, food cropping is done through a specialized land use system suitable in certain ecological zones in Zimbabwe. There is need for new farmers to adopt modern and scientific methods of land husbandry practices in order to protect the land from the agents of land degradation and siltation. It is, therefore, recommended that farmers construct contour ridges, storm drains in all arable lands, avoid stream bank cultivation, or at least cultivate thirty meters from the river streams. This recommendation does well if accompanied with the help of coordinated advocacy education.

Secondly, the government must regulate livestock husbandry in Zimbabwe. Human and cattle tracks are a source of soil erosion and formation of gullies. It is recommended that new black farmers normalize their livestock numbers in line with the ecological carrying capacity of a land that any farmer holds in possession.

Thirdly, the Report of Presidential Land Review Committee (2003) notes that the sustainability of high potential agricultural land is under serious threat as a result of rampant illegal and unregulated gold panning and related mining activities that have led to land degradation. It is recommended that a legal framework be put into effect to control unwarranted mining activities in Zimbabwe.

Fourthly, in view of the increasing depletion of forest areas, more by human activity, it is recommended that farmers grow woodlands in suitable ecologically regions in Zimbabwe. It must be noted, with deep concern, that random removal of forests by sheer cutting trees and veld fires are a recipe for desertification. But in this case, there is a window of hope because forests constitute as a renewable resource.

Fifthly, new farmers who are located in the drought-prone areas, such as those in Masvingo and the rest of other arid provinces in the country, are recommended to resort to Wildlife and Cattle Ranching that are ecologically sustainable. It has been illustrated, a case in point is CAMPFIRE (Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources,

Zimbabwe), that in the dry areas, the economic profits accrued from wildlife and ranching are often much higher than those from crop production (Changing Times, 2010).

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