

**THE POLITICS OF HUNGER: RESETTLED HOUSEHOLDS AND THE FUTURE OF COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE IN POST-2000 ZIMBABWE.**

Vusilizwe Thebe

Department of Development Studies, National University of Lesotho

**ABSTRACT**

Zimbabwe has experienced perennial harvest deficits since the turn of the new millennium. More than half the population survives on humanitarian assistance, yet what was once the country's agricultural empire lies underutilized and reduced to an extension of the subsistence sector. Using an extended case study of three resettled farms in the Mguza District, this study argues that agricultural failure was inherent in the process which came to be known as '*jambanja*'. '*Jambanja*' gave birth to landholders with a divergence of motives, backgrounds, experiences, and resources. It is this diversity that was mirrored by farming practices in resettlement farms. In a new farming environment, away from kin and social contacts, they were abandoned by the state, without any form of post-settlement support. With minimum state intervention, these settlers fell back on the comfort of a farming system they knew best. Employment of such a system had long term implications on sustained food production.

**Keywords:** Zimbabwe; Jambanja; Food Insecurity; Farm Occupations

**INTRODUCTION**

By mid-2003, Zanu-Patriotic Front (PF)'s peasantization project, cloaked as the land reform and resettlement program, was almost complete. The state had successfully transferred 11 million hectares, including the country's well endowed agricultural land, from 4,000 large-scale white-settler commercial farmers to 300,000 small producers and 54,000 indigenous medium/large-scale commercial farmers. The completion of the program also signified the country's transition from Southern Africa's bread basket, and a model of a 'miracle story' of agricultural success, to one of the charity cases in Roe's (1995) continent of '*Except Africa*'. Instead of re-enacting the 'agriculture miracle' of the 1980s, the country experienced recurrent food shortages, with more than half the population surviving on humanitarian assistance. Judging by the narrative justifying land transfers to smallholders, this was not supposed to happen. Assuming, the new farmers, now occupying the 6.5 million hectares of what was white-settler capital's commercial farming empire, were the spearheads of the post-independence agricultural revolution (Eicher, 1995; Jayne, Chisvo & Rukuni, 1994; Rukuni, 1994). Given the present vis-à-vis past successes, certain questions beg answers. What really went wrong? If commercial farms were previously successful farming enterprises, what changed upon occupation by indigenous blacks? If smallholders were successful as communal area farmers, what affected their performances when they took up fertile commercial land?

The common response is to attribute the crisis to natural conditions like perennial droughts and occasional flooding (Bird & Shepherd, 2003; Food and Agricultural Organization, 2003; Food and Agricultural Organization/World Food Program, 2002; Food and Agricultural Service, 2003; World Food Program, 2002; United Nations, 2003). Others attribute the crisis to loss of property rights (Clemens & Moss, 2005; Justice for Agriculture, 2008; Richardson, 2005 & 2007). It is the argument of this article that the crisis was inherent in the confusion and chaos (*jambanja*), which accompanied the process; the lack of state capacity to equip the new farmers; and the destruction of traditional systems, for long the cornerstone of traditional African agriculture. The post-*jambanja* era was not conducive to sustainable food production, neither in the former commercial farming areas or communal areas.

The study draws on data from an extended case study of three neighboring farms (Redwood A & B; Steller Ranch) in Mguza District, Matabeleland North province, and readings of literature that provide empirical and critical accounts of the accelerated program (Alexander & McGregor, 2001; Sachikonye, 2003 & 2005; Scoones, Marongwe, Mavedzenge *et al.* 2010; Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa, 2003). Alexander & McGregor (2001) have argued that farm invasions in Matabeleland North had certain characteristics, different from elsewhere in the country, and the choice of geographical location of the case study was designed to highlight these differences. The case study was employed to separate realities from the myths in newly resettled farms. It was concerned with profiling the resettled farmers, understanding methods, and motives for acquiring land, life as farmers, and more importantly, to assess the kind of post-settlement support made available by government. Understanding settlers' motivations for demanding and holding land was important in drawing parallels between the official narrative and reality on the ground. The evidence is based on a combination of household visits, observations, and informed knowledge of key stakeholders in the farm community. Overall, the study covered 103 settlers, purposely selected to represent the general profile of rural Zimbabwean households, six of which were subjected to a detailed study, where they were monitored during the entire study period. The interest in historical circumstances extended the study to the Gwayi Valley in Lupane District, the place of origin of the six households.

### **FOOD PRODUCTION CRISIS IN POST-2000 ZIMBABWE**

Perennial food insecurity and chronic harvest deficits in 21<sup>st</sup> century Zimbabwe can be understood only in the context of violent and chaotic land occupations and subsequent acquisitions in the year 2000. Together with the historical lineages of 'hoe and wage/wage and hoe' in communal area (Bernstein, 2004), which shaped rural economic activities to a certain extent. The hoe and wage/wage and hoe culture was subsequently transferred to commercial farming areas after the year 2000. Colonial conquest and the advent of capitalism created a rural semi-proletariat class, dependent on both rural land and urban jobs, while simultaneously promoting settler-commercial agriculture through the provision of agricultural incentives (Arrighi, 1970; Bush & Cliffe, 1984; Lebert, 2006; Stoneman & Cliffe, 1989). African areas of low agricultural potential were initially created as a labor reservoir to serve the capitalist sector (Duggan, 1990). Owing to discriminatory policies, indigenous people had remained in subsistence production, using traditional techniques, thus maintaining peasant and commercial agriculture as separate spheres of production (Stoneman & Cliffe, 1989). The disorganization and political nature of the land occupations unfortunately brought the worker-peasant culture and production techniques of indigenous people into a direct collision course with the commercial nature of modern farming.

The dual agrarian economy remained important in the economic development of the country, and while settler agriculture thrived, through neglect, the productivity of indigenous people had declined beyond subsistence between 1901 and 1950 (Arrighi, 1966; Duggan, 1990). Changes in government policy in favor of a rural farming class were only geared at the creation of small African elite, and at the same time denying the majority land (Bush & Cliffe, 1984; Duggan, 1990; Thompson, 2004 & 2007). While such a policy would serve the state well, worker-peasantry was crucial to the livelihoods of Africans. As Duggan (1990) noted, 'Africans themselves clung to the urban-rural ties, and their resistance contributed to the abandonment of the NLHA policy in the early 1960s'. While the colonial state pursued its policy of creating commercial African farmers through the African Purchase Areas scheme, the strategy was sporadic and ineffective; furthermore the population problem in rural communities remained real. At independence in 1980, the reserve population exceeded the actual carrying capacity (Herbst, 1992).

Given population pressure in the reserves, the argument for land reforms often centered on the semi-proletarian class and the sub-proletariat (Bush & Cliffe, 1984). Thus, in the 1980s, land reform focused on promoting equity in land distribution and restitution for past land disenfranchisement. While the 1990s saw a shift in government policy towards the promotion of a black elite farming class, the process was marred by corruption and a general slowdown in land reform (Masiwa, 2005; Moyo, 1995; Sachikonye, 2003 & 2005).

Events towards and at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were spurred by frustrations at the pace of land reform, and elite class interests, which manifested themselves through the land grab scandal of 1994 (Masiwa, 2005; Moyo, 1995). It might be argued, given the sporadic and peaceful nature of early occupations, that they were spurred by genuine land hunger, and were a protest by communal area people against the state (Sachikonye, 2003; Sithole, Campbell, Dore *et al.* 2003). In comparison, later invasions showed some growing militancy, and had an element of orchestration by state institutions (Sithole *et al.* 2003; Sachikonye, 2003). As Sithole *et al.* (2003) noted, these were 'systematic "drive in and set up camp" invasions', led by war veterans and sanctioned by political elites. It is precisely the element of orchestration and the timing, which force people to associate the occupations with the defeat of the referendum in February 2000 (e.g. Moore, 2001; Sachikonye, 2003; Sithole *et al.* 2003). While occupations became a prominent feature in the build-up to the June 2000 general elections, there were no officially defined targets or any clear direction to occupations (Sachikonye, 2003 & 2005; Zhou, 2002).

Reflecting on the chaotic and political nature of the process, Zhou observed: 'The broad objective was to acquire and redistribute five million hectares of land in twelve months, a target set at the 1998 Donors conference. By April 2001, the objective had shifted to acquiring "not less than 8.3 million hectares" (Human Rights Watch, 2002) and going by political pronouncements during the elections in March 2002, the focus had shifted and seemed to target all farmland in the country. . . . . What is clear however is, it has been politicized, uncoordinated, violent and chaotic and contrary to the set principles guiding land to be acquired for resettlement' (Zhou 2002).

Further, the government did not appear to have any control or policy direction during the entire land acquisition process after 2000. Moore (2001) has argued: 'It would seem that the imperative for speedy resettlement did not come from an aroused peasantry, but in the politics of a regime facing economic crisis; the loss of allies within almost all sectors of civil society; and being forced into a corner by the war-veterans'.

But more worrying was what Sachikonye (2005) calls the elements of orchestration, coercion and violence, which 'created a concoction of disorder and lawlessness that was ill suited to a reform process'. This was not helped by what others (e.g. Alexander & McGregor, 2001, Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer, 2003, Moyo, 2001) identified as a variety of motivations guiding farm occupations at both national and local levels. Given the political nature of land occupations, war veterans acquired too much power that they came to occupy a parallel informal structure to formal government structures (Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa, 2003). They mobilized invaders and planned the invasions. According to Chaumba *et al.* (2003), the process also gave 'younger settlers the opportunity to win their stripes as loyal party followers and hence lobby for a position on the new village committees or receive further land'.

The violence, chaos, confusion, and uncertainty that accompanied these farm invasions came to be termed '*jambanja*'. While literally, '*jambanja*' means violence or an angry argument, in year 2000, it came to represent 'state-sponsored lawlessness' (Daily News, November 27, 2001, cf. Chaumba *et al.* 2003). Lawlessness was characterized by destruction and looting of farm properties (Chaumba *et al.*, 2003; Fox, Rowntree and Chigumira, 2006), but more importantly, '*jambanja*' gave birth to new commercial landholders. The smallholders occupying former commercial farming land came from different backgrounds and a different farming system, had different experiences in farming and owned different assets (Fox *et al.* 2006). Land acquisition by invasion and opportunism, ushered a new life for unemployed youths, war veterans, and Zanu (PF) sympathizers (Sithole *et al.* 2003), and as a result, post-fast-track declines in agricultural production were expected (Fox *et al.* 2006). Furthermore, the chaos and violence of the occupations were accompanied by sabotage and looting of farming equipments (Chaumba *et al.* 2003; Fox *et al.* 2006; Justice for Agriculture, 2008).

## **LAND INVADERS, SUBSISTENCE PRODUCERS AND OPPORTUNISTS**

### **Land acquisition by invasion**

Contrary to findings elsewhere in the country (e.g. Scoones *et al.* 2010), evidence from the Mguza case points to a Zanu (PF) centered land acquisition process, with the majority of beneficiaries either having actively participated in farm invasions or being related to influential farm invaders (see Table 1). Land invasions in Mguza, although late (see Alexander & McGregor, 2001), were initiated by the Gwayi Valley branches of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), with the support of unemployed youths and other sympathizers. Initially, these branches initiated an abortive occupation of the Sotane Safari Ranch in Lupane District, but as happened elsewhere in the province, there was little enthusiasm in occupations by community members. While the soils in the ranch are rich, the area experiences similar climatic conditions to those experienced in communal areas, and agricultural activities have always been limited to animal production (livestock and wildlife). Since the war of liberation, the ranch would lie abandoned for numerous periods, but Gwayi Valley residents were always happy to graze their cattle, utilize other resources, and trap game, but never were there attempts to

occupy the territory. Given the lack of enthusiasm from communal area people, the process was abandoned for farms in Mguza District, where together with people from other neighboring districts including Bulawayo, they orchestrated a well coordinated invasion of ranch properties.

*Table 1: Methods of acquiring land in Mguza*

<b>Method of acquiring land</b>	<b>No. of households</b>
Actively participated in farm invasions	39
Through relatives responsible for land allocations	54
Through application	4
Exchange of money	6

*Source: Author (2004)*

The invading party was made of only males, while females and other members of households remained in the communal areas, safeguarding the households' interests. These occupations were well organized and coordinated by war veterans, reminiscent of 'a ride and set camp' scenario identified in Sithole *et al.* (2003). Land occupiers identified with the ruling party (war veterans, party youths, and other sympathizers), and their justification for land invasions ran parallel to the popular narrative promoted by Zanu (PF). A register of the invading party was kept by an elected Political Commissar, who was a member of ZNLWVA, and it is this register, which was later used to compile the official beneficiary list. In a process identical to that noted in Chaumba *et al.* (2003), once land was occupied, individuals would indicate their land claims, using poles and stone pegs. Land allocations were monitored by a committee, elected by the invading party, and headed by a chairperson, usually a war veteran. Relatives of the invading party who remained in the communal areas were also included in the beneficiary list. The Group Political Commissar justified such a rationale in military terms:

In war, not all people are soldiers and not all soldiers go for battle. Before a battle, a reconnaissance party is often sent to pave the way, while the rest of the platoon remains behind. They do not cease to be part of the battle efforts. We were merely a reconnaissance party, while others remained behind looking after the homes and other interests in the communal areas. These remained part of us, and were automatically included in our list. Even during the liberation war, we engaged the enemy, and the *povo* (peasants) remained behind. They had their own specific roles, but remained an important part of the war effort.

The use of military terminology was significant in Zanu (PF)'s attempt to brand land invasions as people's struggles. They were struggles for economic power and the process was aptly referred to as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chimurenga (3<sup>rd</sup> liberation war).

As noted elsewhere in the province by Alexander & McGregor (2001), there were no confrontations between occupiers and farm workers; instead farm workers that collaborated with land occupiers were included in the beneficiary list. Among communal area people, there was very little enthusiasm in land occupations. One reason for the lack of enthusiasm in taking up commercial land was the general satisfaction with landholding in communal areas, where land claims are relatively secure.

People also associated land occupations with Zanu (PF)'s election campaign, and feared eviction during the post-election period. Even land occupiers were not sure of how the state would react to the occupations. Given past experiences where the state adopted heavy handed tactics to deal with illegal land occupants (squatters), land invaders simultaneously kept their communal area land well into 2005.

It is however, difficult to reconcile land occupations with the general narrative justifying land reform. Land occupiers justified land occupations on history, not land hunger or agricultural potential. They were taking back what was theirs. As noted earlier, initial allocation of land was through self allocation, officials from the District Development Fund (DDF) only harmonized existing boundaries and pegs, a process the ZNLWVA termed 'working together' with DDF and extension officials (Chaumba *et al.* 2003).

The tenure system was not clear, although indications were that land occupation was on a permit system, and ownership was to depend on productive use. Land parcels were small by communal area standards. Each household was allocated a total of 4 acres (an acre in residential plot; 3 acres of cropping fields), and access to communal woodlots. Land recipients in Redwood A were further allocated an acre of irrigated plots. However, since the borehole and other irrigation equipments were either sabotaged or stolen at occupation, farming activities remained dependent on seasonal rains, and the cropping system was inclined towards inter-cropping (maize, melons, pumpkins, and sweet reeds) than mono-cropping.

#### **Subsistence farming in former commercial farms**

Research in Mguza farms established some gaps in the narrative justifying land occupations on the readiness of communal area farmers to take over commercial farm production. By 2005, only 32 percent of households had managed to clear all their land allotments. The remainder had cleared only a part of their allotment for crop production. All households had converted half of their residential plots into garden plots, and in 24 percent of cases, these garden plots were the only cultivated areas. Residents, particularly war veterans (the unofficial government mouth pieces in the resettlement farms) had indicated that a land audit would take place in 2004, and they had compiled a list of land beneficiaries that should be de-listed. By 2005, no audit had taken place, and the land still lay idle.

#### **Agro-marginal land, non farmers and pretenders**

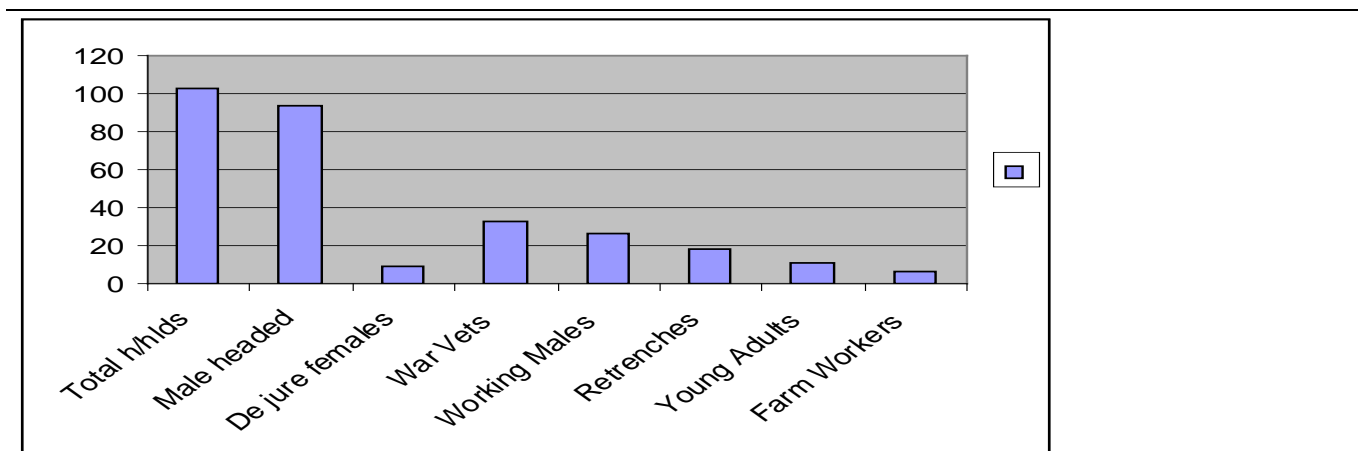
Land in the occupied farms is generally rich; the majority had never been cropped, and subsequently, had developed into a thick forest, inhabited by wild game and reptiles. However, some of the land is poor, the type that Worby (2001) calls 'sandy gusu'. Yet, households forcibly occupied and were allocated land on sandy locations. Actually, 13% of households occupied land of similar quality to the land they abandoned in the communal areas. In the communal areas, land was not limited to 3 acres, and households could afford to allow land to fallow and regenerate since they could '*tema madiro*' (clear land as you like). For some, the land they occupied in Mguza District was even considered poorer than land that they abandoned in their communal areas. Part of Steller Farm, for example, is on Kalahari sands - the type the Ndebele refer to as *umsenya*. While these soils are known for their low fertility, extension officials and other government officials responsible for land allocations approved these sites. In fact, for households to accept land they fully understood to be agriculturally unrewarding gives an

impression that they were not into crop production. Furthermore, while land was supposedly occupied on permits, beneficiaries were permitted to engage in off-farm activities, provided the land remained productive. Such a stipulation was congruent with the culture of households and encouraged a semi-proletariat existence on land where agricultural productivity was paramount.

**WHO WERE THE NEW FARMERS?**

Settlers in Mguza farms came from different backgrounds, owned different assets and their farming experiences and knowledge base were as diverse as their motivations. Despite this diversity, they were all united by their desire to acquire a piece of what was white commercial land, and through such acquisitions, they passed themselves as either landholders or new farmers. Except for former farm workers, all land beneficiaries were of Ndebele origin, had some basic education (some youths had completed secondary level education), and fell within the economic active age range of 23–65. However, commercial crop production was a new experience to all land occupants, and this was reflected by their resources (see Fig. 1 & Table 2). Land beneficiaries had lived a worker-peasant existence, engaging only in subsistence agriculture, but their main sources of livelihoods were always remittances from the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

*Fig.1: Profile of landholders*



*Source: Author (2004)*

*Table 2: Common household resources*

Livestock	Other Assets
Herds of cattle	Ox-drawn/donkey drawn ploughs
Herds of donkeys	Scotch carts
Smaller mammals (goats)	Wheelbarrows
Chicken	Yokes and chains

*Source: Author (2004)*

**Worker-peasants**

Landholders in formal employment included urban workers, civil servants, and cross-border migrants. Where the men worked outside the community, women remained as *de facto* heads, and made farm decisions. In the majority of cases, even grown-up children spent most of the time outside the community. For cross-border migrants, even the women lived in South Africa. Worker-peasants acquired land through their relationships with war veterans and other officials or through their financial resources. South African based workers often bribed their way into the beneficiary list. As a result of their ability and willingness to use their financial prowess, their land claims remained secure, even though their land allotments were not fully utilized.

Worker-peasants owned assets that are important in any agrarian society (refer back to Table 2), and had financial resources to purchase agricultural inputs, but they relied heavily on remittances. Agriculture remained a subsistence activity, and had always been a subsistence activity, supplementing proceeds from the formal and informal sectors at their places of origin. Their assets were very important in building social networks, and were important in securing their land claims. Resource-poor households depended on these networks for their livelihoods, and due to the state of the country's economy, cross-border migrants were a reliable supply of scarce agricultural chemicals, desperately needed by households to curb the spread of livestock diseases. Also, one can not underestimate the importance of these households as contacts in the cities and South Africa.

### **War veterans**

The war veterans were ex-Zipra (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) cadres, and their conversation on land and agriculture revolved around what '*mdala*' (Nkomo) had planned, which Zanu (PF) failed to do after independence. They talked about their farm properties that were confiscated by the state after 1982, and showed enthusiasm to being the new farmers. Despite their enthusiasm in being the new farmers, they all came from worker-peasant backgrounds. Land quality and climatic conditions in their communal areas had kept agriculture at subsistence levels. Agricultural activities were further constrained by persistent droughts, which particularly killed productive assets. But they brought to the farms, some assets (livestock, ploughs, and scotch carts) from their places of origin, and acquired more livestock from surrounding ranches at the time of the occupations. However, like the former group, they had secure livelihoods outside agriculture, in the form of a government monthly stipend awarded in 1997.

### **De-jure female landholders**

*De jure* female landholders were not the poor and vulnerable. The majority of these women got their land through their relationships with men in the resettlement community, particularly sons and other relatives. All the elderly women were supported by children working in South Africa, and due to this support, they also had secure livelihoods outside agriculture, and could afford to hire labor and purchase inputs. The majority owned agricultural assets, but had few livestock. The cattle herds lost during earlier droughts were not rebuilt, but all these households owned a herd of donkeys. The two young female land recipients employed other people to reside at their Mguza home while they continued residing in the city. However, their land claims were maintained through occasional visits and benevolence by the community leadership.



*Bongiwe Moyo*, for example was one of the young single woman land recipients in Redwood A. She got the land through her relationship with a Zanu (PF) District official. Despite her enthusiasm in acquiring the land, she was an 'absent land lord'. She stayed in Bulawayo and according to village sources; she only paid occasional two-day visits to her home. Instead, she employed a man to reside and conduct farming activities on her behalf. She had only built two round huts, and owned no assets. Due to resource constraints and non-availability of tractors, cropping was done on a garden plot measuring 500 square meters, while her allocated 3 acres of cropping land remained idle. On her occasional visits, she would buy beer for her neighbors, and these favors were extended to people considered influential (the Zanu (PF) branch chairman, the ward councilor, the Political Commissar and other members of the committee). By so doing, she was able to safeguard her land against re-allocation.

### **Former farm workers and young adults**

Former farm workers had the farming acumen, acquired through years as farm workers but they lacked resources. In the absence of state assistance, they relied on giving their labor in exchange for tillage (*ukubambisa*). Young, newly married adults also lacked resources needed for a successful occupation in agriculture. Although they all had herded livestock and ploughed fields in their communal areas, and three had basic training in agriculture, at secondary school level; they believed that their lives belonged outside the agricultural sector. They needed jobs, and expressed a desire to migrate to South Africa. For both categories, this was the first land they had owned, and were determined to make it their homes. Both had young families, which militated against successful productive farming, thereby putting pressure on them to abandon the land.

In general, all households faced critical labor shortages: 1) since land was allocated to households not individuals, the majority of resettled households left kin and other social networks in communal areas; 2) labor of school going children was lost during school sessions; 3) the outflow of other members of households to cities and South Africa; 4) because of the unpopularity of agriculture and the proximity of the area to Bulawayo, households found it difficult to attract paid labor.

Thus, despite their enthusiasm in acquiring land, even war veterans failed to match rhetoric with actions, while the attitude of worker-peasants, *de jure* females and young adults, remained that of disinterest. While land mattered to all occupants, not all subscribed to the state vision. Commercial land remained just another piece of land. The majority of households did not acquire land for a livelihood; they needed land, and land became available, and they had the resources (networks and finance) to acquire it. However, there is little evidence to suggest that these households were ready to settle into a new way of life. Instead, evidence points to a continuation of practices that have long informed their livelihoods in the communal areas.

### **POST-SETTLEMENT SUPPORT**

Settlers brought into their new environment their own resources (livestock, farming equipments, skills, and experiences), which for years were successful in a different farming system. For a successful transition to a different farming system, they needed to undergo a process of de-schooling, schooling, and re-schooling. Such a process could not be achieved through political intent and rhetoric alone. It needed a state with capacity to follow rhetoric with actions. On the ground, war veterans

played an important part in rallying support and instilling fear on settlers to utilize their land. They also used their newly acquired power to lobby the state for resources (tractors and inputs).

### **Provision of extension service and seed loans**

On its part, the state enlarged the size of the extension service, but extension officers were overwhelmed by numbers. In the farms we are concerned with here, the extension officer met farmers only on Wednesdays, at a central point near the main road. Farm visits were few and far apart, and usually on request. These officers had large areas to cover and had no transport. Surprisingly, land owners expressed satisfaction with the status quo.

During the 2003/2004 season, settlers acquired seeds and chemical fertilizers as part of a grain loan scheme, which farmers were expected to pay back after the harvest. But, the use of chemical fertilizers was a completely new experience for many households, and they sold their allocation of chemical fertilizers to cooperative farmers nearby. By 2005, all farmers had not repaid the grain loan, because the post-resettlement period was general characterized by chronic harvest deficits.

### **Tractors and bank loans**

As in other parts of the country, the government had promised resettled farmers the use of tractors from the DDF offices, and war veterans used these promises as justification for the re-enactment of the 'agricultural revolution'. However, by end of ploughing in the 2003/2004 agriculture season, the promised tractors had not reached resettled farmers, not even the enthusiastic war veterans. There were rumors that the few available tractors were hijacked by political elites occupying the commercial medium/large scale farms (A2 model). In the absence of tractors, farmers fell back on the traditional ox or donkey drawn ploughs. Farmers also talked of a bank loan scheme from the country's agriculture bank. Similarly, by end of 2004, all the farmers were still waiting for the disbursement of the funds. However, in an economy where inflation was spiraling off-track, by the time loans were disbursed, they were just worthless pieces of paper.

## **DESTRUCTION OF THE KINSHIP SYSTEM**

The dominant method of land acquisition in Mguza farms was participation in land invasions, but war veterans and Zanu (PF) officials also incorporated relatives into the resettlement beneficiary list. Even so, not all people took up the land offers, resulting in the breakdown of kin units. Communal area people develop certain attachments to the land, even if such land is not agriculturally rewarding. With continuous residence, people develop means of survival, build relationships, and more importantly become attached to land through relatives buried in that piece of land. It would appear that people who relocated to Mguza farms did not have strong attachment to the communal area land.

Relocates can be grouped into three categories:

1. *Young families*: These were families whose land needs could not be satisfied by the intra-household redistribution system.
2. *Congested households*: People aligned to the ruling party, whose land needs were constrained by overcrowding in communal areas. These orchestrated the land invasions.

3. *Widows*: These wanted to be closer to either their oldest or youngest sons.

People relocated to Mguza as nuclear families, leaving behind long established social networks. There were also cases where widows followed sons, whom in Ndebele culture, are still considered heads even if they have their own homes. Also, resettlement plots were allocated to households rather than individuals, and such a procedure discouraged the relocation of whole families. The majority of people who relocated owned assets, but the nuclear household as a unity of agriculture production had its own limitations. While some households had an average size of six people, the labor of school-going children was lost during school sessions. Households particularly struggled for male labor, even in situations where they managed to build new social networks. Systems of share-cropping or resource-pooling, so common in communal areas and Ndebele culture, were rare in a new environment where the majority of households had own assets. In cases where inter-household cooperation existed, such cooperation was limited to cultivation and did not extend to other agriculture related tasks.

This traditional system of production has long informed African agriculture, and resettled households were exposed to some form of share-cropping at their places of origin. People from extended and agriculturally successful households attributed the success of communal area agriculture to labor drawn from kin and resource-poor households. For worker-peasants, share-cropping was the basis for successful subsistence agriculture, through pooling of labor remaining in the communal area households. Communal area households would also organize 'community work parties' (*ilima*) to ease their labor constraints, but the disintegration of the kinship system and a new agricultural system in resettlement farms, made such a system impossible.

The relocation of nuclear household units to Mguza farms left traditional farming households in communal areas. For the majority of the households, the male heads had died, together with their power and prosperity; the large cattle herds had disappeared; and the fields, now exhausted and eroded were either sub-divided among members remaining in the community or abandoned and released as pastures. It needs to be stressed here that people that relocated took away part of the productive resources, depriving households of additional labor. To illustrate, the average household size was five, and in most cases the household was comprised of the widow and grand children or hired helpers.

These factors impacted negatively on agricultural production, leading to perennial grain deficits. Decline in agricultural prominence was characterized by reduced areas cropped, increased fallowing of agricultural land, few cattle, and more importantly, loss of power by these households to mobilize the labor of non-relatives. The widows could not manage the household estates on their own and could not manure the fields. In 2005, these households were recipients of food aid from the World Vision Food Relief Program. Yet, these households were generally known for their food security even during the most severe of droughts, mainly due to their ability to produce a surplus for storage, to fall back on during times of hardship. During the 1991/92 drought, they had remained food secure and even sold grain, particularly millet to households in the community.

## CONCLUSION

The harmonization of resettlement plots by state officials was an endorsement for chaos and confusion. Not only did the process give legitimacy to a resettlement list, whose compilation followed no formal criterion, the process was also open to abuse, and certain people gate-crashed the land beneficiary list, either through bribery or nepotism. The process gave birth to landholders with a divergence of motives, backgrounds, and resources, and this diversity was mirrored by farming practices. From the day 'jambanja' started, a new era dawned in the country's agricultural sector. The old landholders were replaced by new landholders, and this transfer in land ownership ushered a different farming system in commercial farming areas. In actual fact, modern farming practices were replaced by traditional farming practices that have long informed communal area agricultural production.

While the transition from a commercial farming system to a traditional farming system was expected, given the lack of selection criteria and the history of communal area agriculture, a program of the magnitude of the fast-track demanded huge financial injections. But the fast-track process remained stuck within the realms of politics and rhetoric, with no post-settlement program. Settlers were farmers in their own right; they had knowledge and resources, which for years had worked in a different farming system. For a successful transition to full-time commercial farming, they needed to undergo a process of de-schooling, schooling, and re-schooling. However, the state lacked capacity. The result was, aspiring farmers, pretenders, and worker-peasants found themselves in a new farming system, away from kin and social contacts, and abandoned by the state, without any form of post-settlement support. With minimum state intervention, these settlers fell back on the comfort of a farming system they knew best, and their situation was not helped by the post-2000 climatic conditions.

Putting aside the narrative justifying the fast-tracking of land redistribution, the process was dictated by political objectives, and these overrode economic and social considerations, and a need for clear guidelines. In fact the lack of clarity worked well for Zanu (PF) as it kept the political nature of the process cloaked in the legitimate robe of 'land hunger'. It was however, this political component of land transfers and their manifestation as state-sponsored anarchy, which spelt the final rites on the country's agriculture sector. Playing politics with commercial farming land had both short and long term consequences, and the resulting situation in former commercial farming areas was not conducive to agriculture sustainability.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Vusilizwe Thebe: Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, National University of Lesotho