

**Medicine Masiwa (ed), Post Independence Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Controversies and Impact on the Economy, Friedrich Stiftung, Harare, 2004, pp222.**

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The book, although not a pioneering work in the field of land conflicts, represents a break from previous approaches in that instead of focusing only on one aspect of land reform, it covers several issues. Thus, besides being rich in terms of content on land redistribution in Zimbabwe from 1980 to the 2000 Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), it is also relatively cheap, considering the wide range of issues covered. The book begins with an introduction that locates the origins of land reform in Zimbabwe. Rural poverty and environmental degradation, which came about as a result of the skewed nature of land ownership in favour of the minority white settlers, is rightly given as the major reason for land redistribution.

Chapter one analyzes the successes and failures of the first two phases of land reform in Zimbabwe. The authors, Medicine Masiwa and Lovemore Chipungu bemoan the effects of unplanned resettlement programs, particularly the Fast Tract Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). The section highlights the multifaceted objectives of the first phase of resettlement such as the provision of infrastructure and other economic services destroyed by the war of liberation. The authors argue that this phase was largely a failure due to the “willing buyer willing seller” clause enshrined in the Lancaster House constitution, and corruption and class interests which saw the bulk of the acquired farms going to party stalwarts and chiefs in government. The dynamics in policy approach are well documented and explained. The failure of the second phase of resettlement epitomized by the reluctance of donors to fund the programme in the 1998 September Donors’ Conference and the rejection of the constitutional Referendum in February 2000 is persuasively advanced.

In chapter two, Nelson Marongwe evaluates the socio-economic impact of FTLRP. According to the author, the impact of the programme was largely negative. Of the eleven sectors of the economy that were assessed, all indicated a negative growth. The author advances that the major reason for this decline was the level of violence that accompanied the programme, which bred an environment of uncertainty on the farms. This in turn forced many white farmers to reduce production. On the other hand, the incoming new settlers possessed limited resources, experience and technical support to make any impact as to ameliorate the situation.

The third chapter explores one of the long neglected sectors of the society in the labour history of the country, the farm workers. Godfrey Magaramombe acknowledges the resettlement programme as a key instrument for addressing rural poverty but criticizes it for neglecting the farm worker community (p53). According to the author, this stemmed mainly from the fact that government accused the farm workers for having voted for the “ NO” vote in the 2000 constitutional referendum which it argued would have empowered it to take land without compensation. Although quite informative on how and why the farm workers were excluded from the resettlement programme, the author does not indicate completely how the farm worker community responded to this exclusion. They are just presented as hapless victims yet they responded in one way or the other. For instance, they ganged up with their white employers to resist eviction.

In chapter four, Maxwell Mudhara analyses the impact of the FTLRP on Large Scale Commercial (LSC) Agriculture Production. The author succeeds to do this by comparing production levels in the LSC sector before and after the FTLRP. Prior to the Programme, the LSC sector played a pivotal role in the economy, contributing 20% of the GDP. The sector was also responsible for the production of the bulk of the country’s cash crops. However, after the inception of the programme, production plummeted in the sector. A plethora of reasons have been advanced for this decline. Among these reasons were the facts that the new farmers who took over were largely inexperienced as the majority of them were never into farming, lacked machinery and equipment, and battled with a disruption of irrigation facilities and lack of finance. A way forward to revive the productivity of the agricultural sector is also proposed. Critical areas of concern noted include sorting out the issue of land tenure so that the new farmers have legal title to their land, which they can use to acquire credit. The need to equip the new farmers with knowledge and technical know-

how is also noted. Irrigation, machinery and equipment, as well as agricultural inputs including finance are also identified as other critical areas. The author raps up the chapter by arguing that it was critical for government to consider how the new farmers were going to cope in the context of their limited resources before embarking on the programme.

In chapter five Takawira Mubvami assesses the impact of the FTLRP on the biophysical environment. The chapter opens with a synopsis of the impact of the programme on land cover (vegetation), soils and water. It is argued that the programme had debilitating effects on water and wildlife resources. The programme caused the encroachment of agricultural activities onto wetlands in areas such as the Midlands and Manicaland provinces resulting in the drying up of most of these wetlands. The author rightly observes a general decline in wildlife on resettled farms. Most animal species have been poached while most of the wildlife conservancies all virtually disappeared by the end of 2002. To address these environmental challenges, the author pushes for the creation of a strong deterrent regime guaranteed by the effective enforcement of laws also backed up by an effective monitoring scheme. The author concludes this chapter by once again bemoaning lack of security of tenure as a major deterrent to any meaningful and sustainable conservation by individual farmers. Thus security is recommended so that farmers can pay attention to issues of environmental management.

Chapter six, Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP): Precursor to the FTLRP, explores the impact of ESAP on the small-scale farmers and the rural population at large. The small-scale farmers emerged in the immediate post independence period as an attempt by government to decongest the communal areas. According to the author, Godfrey Kanyenze, some gains were recorded in this programme, which was heavily supported by government in terms of inputs, finance marketing and extension services. Kanyenze argues that with the adoption of ESAP, these gains were undone, throwing not only the small-scale farmers into poverty, but also the generality of the population at large. Lines of credit to the sector, provision of extension services, as well as other services, and the removal of subsidies greatly disadvantaged the small-scale farmers. The author concludes the chapter by rightly observing that the poverty, which came to characterize these farmers as well as the population as a result of ESAP, partly accounts for the radical redistribution of land under the FTLFP in the year 2000.

In chapter seven; Law, Politics and the Land Reform process in Zimbabwe, Lovemore Madhuku explores one of the most critical areas in Zimbabwe's land issue; the role of law in politics. The land issue is regarded as a matter of high politics and Madhuku poses a critical question: Does law follow politics? OR Is it the reverse? (P124). Dating right back to 1890 when the country was colonized up to the FTLRP era, the author argues that in all cases, colonial and post colonial, law played second fiddle to politics. For instance, he shows that during the colonial period laws that were passed to dispossess Africans of their land were unfair and unjust but prevailed because those who controlled the levers political power desired so. In the immediate post independence period, 1980-1990, the British government that authored the Lancaster House constitution, which governed the issue of land redistribution, was politically sympathetic to their kith and kin hence the limited scope in the constitution to reposes land.

After the expiry of the Lancaster House constitution restriction in 1990, the government of Zimbabwe also used law in exactly the same way as the colonial government to advance its political agenda. This is especially clear in the period after 2000. In the context of violent and illegal seizures of white owned land by land hungry Zimbabweans, the law also played second fiddle to politics. In addition to refusing to act against the "invaders", government went further to promulgate a number of laws seen as greatly unfair and unjust by the white farmers and others, to enable the repossession of land from the former white colonial masters.

In chapter eight, Land Reform and Gender in Zimbabwe, Abby Mgugu and Rindai Chimonyo underscores the need to mainstream gender in the land reform process. The authors criticise the lack of government sensitivity to the need to allocate land to women as individuals. It is advanced that right from the pre-colonial, colonial to post colonial periods, women have been marginalized in terms of access to and ownership of land in Zimbabwe. The authors are critical of the policy framework governing women's land rights. They argue that the various policy frameworks on the land reform fall short of mainstreaming gender. For instance, they indicate that there is a glaring absence of the mention and use of terms like equity and justice as instruments that would be used to bring about social justice between men and women (p153). In order to achieve gender equity in land redistribution, the authors propose that there be both policy and legal reforms. They also

recommend the amendment of various sections of the constitution, which deal with land reform so that they unambiguously state the need to consider women in the whole land reform process.

Chapter nine explores the HIV and AIDS situation, prevalence and assesses the mitigating programmes on Zimbabwean farms in the context of the FTLRP. The author, Philemon Kwaramba, makes a poignant observation that health and agriculture have traditionally received separate research policy attention in Zimbabwe. Thus this chapter is a pioneering work in treating the two issues, health and agriculture, together. The author persuasively argues that the HIV /AIDS epidemic poses serious threats and challenges to the resettlement farming systems in Zimbabwe. The disease has wider and far-reaching consequences, which culminate in increased food insecurity as a result of depleted agricultural labour force and death, patient attention, loss of remittances, agricultural knowledge and experience among others.

The author notes that so far, there has not been any corresponding HIV and AIDS management plan developed to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the disease among the newly located farm families. The Author warns that the agrarian reform programme, particularly the A2 model, risk declining into subsistence farming if the situation is not seriously considered. To arrest a possible disaster, the author calls for a multi sectoral approach to fight the disease. Unity of purpose among all stakeholders; NGOs, various government departments, research institutions, the private sector, farm organizations as well as farm workers is considered paramount to minimizing the impact of HIV and AIDS on the agrarian sector.

Chapter ten, Land Movements and the Democratization process in Zimbabwe: Contradictions of Neo-Liberalism underscores the need to recognize the importance of addressing the land question in terms of contemporary equity and historical justice. The author, Sam Moyo, argues that these are crucial parameters within which broader political reform and democratization questions must be addressed. The land occupations in Zimbabwe are located in the much broader quest for land in Africa as a whole, Asia and Latin America. The author also chronicles the FTLRP phase. He further advances that social movements, including the land occupation movement, can provide some progressive movement on democratization and land reform. He notes that the negative feedback that emerge from such movements are mostly short term against the long term benefits of assuaging historical grievances and equitable distribution of productive resources.

The book ends with a conclusion and way forward. The editor of the book, Medicine Masiwa, argues that in redistributing land to the black majority to achieve political stability, the government was correct. However, he is quick to point out that the method that was used to transfer the land was not the best. Because of the violence that accompanied the last phase of transferring land, significant damage was caused to the economy. As a way forward to rebuilding the shuttered economy and the agricultural sector in particular, Masiwa identifies confidence building by government in its land reform and in the economy in general, as the most crucial starting point. The need to strengthen and co-ordinate the institutions dealing with the land issues, consistency transparency and sustainability are underscored as also crucial to the recovery process.

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