

**FAST-TRACKED TO PROSPERITY OR INTO POVERTY?
AN ASSESSMENT OF ZIMBABWE'S FAST TRACK RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME ON BENEFICIARIES
LIVES AT BEACON KOP FARM IN SHURUGWI DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Beneficiaries of Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme (FTLRP) have been admired by fellow citizens who for different reasons failed to access land under this accelerated national agrarian reform programme which started in July 2000. With the land being the backbone of the peasant economy which characterizes Zimbabwe's rural areas, it was every peasant farmer's wish to own virgin land or land in the country's prime farming regions and move from the generally exhausted poor soils of the communal areas. Of course most communal farmers who needed land got it but have their lives improved as a result or they are now worse off? This study sought to assess Zimbabwe's FTLRP on beneficiaries' lives at Beacon Kop farm in Shurugwi ward 17. Questionnaires, informal group discussions as well as participatory observations were used to solicit data from the randomly selected respondents both from the villagized plots (ordinary beneficiaries) and the war veterans' plots. Results show that the beneficiary farmers indeed needed land. Their zeal to produce was however stifled by many factors which included unavailability and inadequacy of inputs (including drought power) as well as the erratic and unpredictable climatic regime characterized by extremities like floods and droughts. Basic social services and infrastructure like boreholes, clinics, schools and roads are either unavailable or too far off to be of significant help to them. Many concede that their villages of origin were much better in terms of services delivery than their new home area but are hopeful for a better future. The study recommends that the government make available both seed and fertilizers well before the start of the planting season so that farmers can plan ahead with confidence. The government must also provide loans for early tillage programmes payable after good harvests. The government must also drill boreholes, organize farmers into cooperatives, and encourage them to produce horticultural products for sale to the nearby city of Gweru which has a ready market. A Primary school and a Secondary school as well as a clinic must also be built in order to improve the lives of the resettled farmers and their families. Government cannot achieve all this on its own. It is therefore important that it convinces the international community that the FTLRP is a foregone historical process which must be supported for the benefit of beneficiaries and the country's development at large.

Key words: Fast-track land reform programme (FTLRP); Agrarian reform; Model A1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Land underpins the economic, social and political lives of the majority of people in Zimbabwe who depend on agriculture and natural resources for their social reproduction (Moyo, 1995; GOZ, 2001). It was over land that the armed war of liberation was fought from 1966 culminating with political majority rule in 1980. At independence, the new black government inherited a racially skewed agricultural ownership where the white large-scale commercial farmers consisting of less than 1% of the total population occupied 45% of agricultural land. 75% of this land was in the high rainfall areas of the country where the potential for agricultural production was high. Equally and significantly, 60% of this large-scale commercial land was not merely underutilized but wholly unutilized (GOZ, 2001).

The new government however failed to deliver meaningfully on the land question in the early years until February 2000 when its draft constitution was rejected in a national referendum. Sections 56 and 57 of the draft constitution were going to make it easier for the government to acquire land for resettlement. The rejection of the draft constitution was more of a show of the ruling party's waning support rather than the weakness of the constitution itself (Masiwa and Chipungu, 2004; Madhuku, 2004). People still needed land but they had suffered under the 1991-1996 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) imposed on them by the ZANU (PF) in collaboration with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Most workers in urban areas had been lured by a new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (formed in 1999) which claimed to sympathize with the workers and urged workers to vote against the draft constitution. The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), an ally of the MDC, together with the white commercial farmers also campaigned vigorously for the rejection of the draft constitution (Madhuku, 2004; Marongwe, 2004; Kanyenze, 2004). These allies campaigned against the draft constitution because they believed the ZANU (PF) government was using it as an escape route against its failures.

The response to the rejection of the draft constitution came in the form of white-owned commercial farm invasions by frustrated war veterans and landless villagers. Under pressure from these groups, the government legitimized these violent invasions through an accelerated land reform and resettlement programme through a constitutional amendment by Parliament in April 2000 (Masiwa and Chipungu, 2004). On July 15 2000, the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme (FTLRP) was officially launched (Masiwa, 2004). Fast track is an accelerated phase of the Agrarian Reform meant to speed up the pace of land acquisition and resettlement in which activities which can be done quickly "shall be done in an accelerated manner" (GOZ, 2001). According to Utete (2003), Zimbabwe's land Reform Programme was meant to power the transformations of the rural economy, raise agricultural production to higher levels, enhance agriculture's contribution to national food security and individual development and provide a firm platform for more extensive collaborative interaction between the country and its regional development partners.

According to GOZ (2001) the Agrarian Reform revolves around land reform where the systematic dispossession and alienation of the land from the black indigenous people during the period of colonial rule are adequately addressed. It involves restructuring of access to land and an overall transformation of the existing farming system, institutions and structures. It includes access to markets, credit, training and access to social, developmental and economic amenities.

It also seeks to enhance agricultural productivities, leading to industrial and economic empowerment and macroeconomic growth in the long term. Land reform in Zimbabwe is a means (not an end) to address issues of inequality, historical injustices; inefficiencies in production and distribution, poverty in communal areas among other things (Derman, 2006; Zikhali, 2008). To prove his government's determination and resilience against continued intervention by Western countries into the internal matters of his country over the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme (FTLRP), President Mugabe, cited by Derman (2006) boldly declared that:

“Gone are the days when Africa produced tragic revolutions. We have to defend our policies and pursue them unhindered”

Although the FTLRP was expected to cover a period of only one and a half years (July 2000-December 2001), it ended up lasting an entire decade (2000-2009).

The FTLRP was designed in two models, Model A1 and Model A2. Model A1 is the decongestion model for the generality of the landless people. It has a villagized and a self-contained variant. Model A2 was to replace the Commercial Farm Settlement Scheme (CFSS) as the indigenization model and is now referred to as the Small, Medium and Large Scale Commercial Settlement Scheme (SMLSCSS). Beacon Kop, the subject of this research is an example of Model A1 and falls under the villagized variant.

The villagized model A1 variant is a translocation type of resettlement with the villagized type of settlement. Settlers are allocated individual residential and arable plots but share common grazing, woodlot and water points. Each household is allocated a minimum of 3 hectares as arable land with the remainder set aside for grazing (GOZ, 2001; Sukume, Moyo and Matondi, 2004). The principal target group for this model was the landless peasants in the communal areas who formed the majority among the land hungry. 20% of all resettlement stands under this model were however reserved for war veterans. The government was going to provide essential services to the Model A1 villagized variant in the form of limited basic infrastructure which included a primary school, a clinic, a decent housing unit per household and a Blair toilet per household, boreholes, dip tanks, track roads, feeder roads and farmer support services such as tillage, seed packs and fertilizers (GOZ, 2001).

According to Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum (2009), a combination of factors ranging from poor government policies, adverse weather, lack of timely availability of inputs and severe economic constraints to underutilization of land have contributed to episodic food crises in Zimbabwe following the fast-track land reform programme. However, empirical evidence from a set of land reform beneficiaries suggests that Zimbabwe's FTLRP was successful: the internal rate of return to land reform project is high, settlers accumulated substantial amounts of assets and they increased their agricultural productivity substantially over time. (Deininger, Hoozevee and Kinsey, 2002).

A number of studies have been carried out on the effects of the programme on former farm workers (Moyo, Rutherford and Dede Amanor-Wilks 2000; Marongwe; Masiwa, 2004; Magaramombe, 2004), on the plight of the former white commercial

farmers (Madhuku, 2004; Masiiwa, 2004; Solidarity Peace Trust, 2006; Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum, 2009) and on its environmental effects (Matsa and Muringaniza, 2010) but very few if any studies have focused on the plight of the resettled farmer under the FTLRP.

It is in light of this backdrop that this study seeks to assess the effects of the FTLRP on the lives of the beneficiaries including their preparedness to own land, their production levels from 2000 to 2009, identifying reasons for increased or poor production levels as well as assessing their quality of life in relation to the provision (availability and accessibility) of their basic needs-all in comparison to their areas of origin before being resettled at Beacon Kop farm.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA (MAP OF STUDY AREA)

Beacon Kop farm is situated in Shurugwi district about 25 km west of Shurugwi town and about 30 km east of Gweru, the provincial capital city of the Midlands province. Following the 2000 fast track land reform and resettlement programme, this former white-owned commercial farm was partitioned and allocated to 14 veterans of the war of liberation (Second Chimurenga) and 100 other villagers. It is now administratively part of Shurugwi ward 17. The farm is located near the mineral rich geological formation commonly known as the Great Dyke of Zimbabwe. The farm has some exhausted gold mines and a number of gold panning sites. Beacon Kop lies in agro-ecological region 3 and receives an average annual rainfall of between 650-800mm spread between November and April (Matsa and Muringaniza, 2010).

Dominant human activities at Beacon Kop farm include rain fed subsistence crop farming in summer as well as subsistence livestock farming. Illegal gold panning is also practiced by most resettled farmers especially during the dry season when their fields lie idle because of absence of irrigation facilities. The average family size in ward 17 and at Beacon Kop in particular is 7 which mean that the approximate population from the 114 families on the farm is 798.

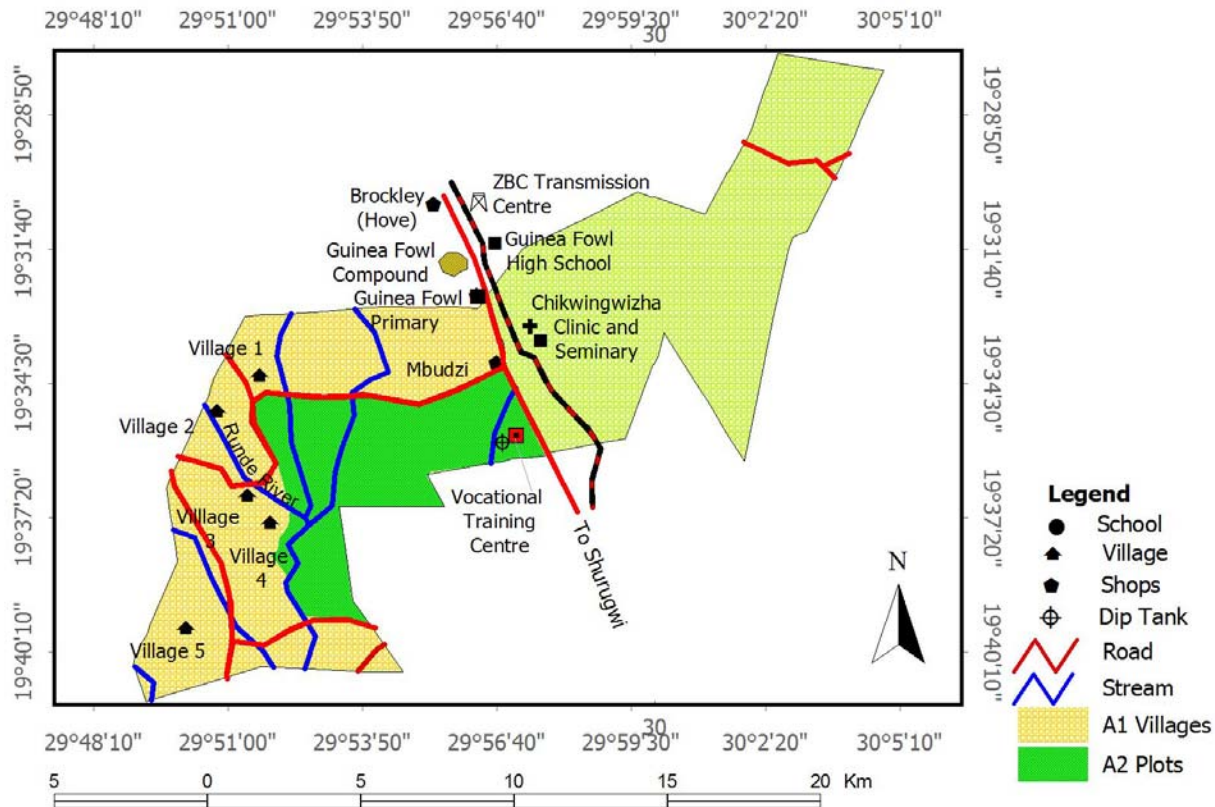


Figure 1: Map of Beacon Kop Farm and part of its environs

The type of vegetation is Savanna parkland or open savanna. Vegetation cover is moderate and consists mainly of indigenous deciduous trees such as *musasa* (*brachystegia speciformis*), *mupfuti* (*brachystegia boehmii*), *mutondo* (*julbernadia globiflora*) and *mususu* (*terminalia*). Grass type is predominantly thatching grass (*hyparrhenia*). Soils are generally sandy loam and are derived from granite and vary in colour and texture. In times of more than normal rainfall, the soils usually become leached.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted between September and December 2010 and focused at a randomly selected sample from the 114 resettled farmers under the government’s controversial fast-track land reform and resettlement programme (FTLRP) at Beacon Kop farm in Shurugwi ward 17. The farm was divided into the war veterans’ plots (larger portions per beneficiary household) and the villages (smaller portions of 3-5ha per household). The war veterans’ plots have 14 members, all veterans of the Zimbabwe’s war of liberation, while the villages have 100 beneficiary households. A Geographic Information System (GIS) random point generator function was used to randomly pick 8 beneficiaries from the 14 beneficiaries from the war veterans’ plots and 36 beneficiaries from the 100 beneficiaries on the villagized section. The selected beneficiaries became the subjects of this study. This was done to avoid bias in the selection of the respondents. Although it would have been ideal to include all the 114 beneficiaries in the sample, this was not possible because of the volatile political situation in the

country during the time of the study. Extreme caution thus had to be exercised during data collection to avoid political labeling and possible reprimand.

Data gathering techniques for this study included questionnaires, group discussions and participant observation. The 36 respondents from the villagized section and 8 respondents from the war veterans' plots were given questionnaires to answer. Questions revolved around the beneficiaries' preparedness to own land, their production levels at their new plots from 2000 to 2009, reasons for poor production levels as well as a comparative assessment of their quality of life at Beacon Kop in relation to their villages of origin.

Since all the questionnaires were administered by the researcher at the respondents homes, the researcher took whatever opportunity to start a group discussion with the beneficiaries family members and other villagers in the home especially during collaborative village functions(*nhimbe*) to hear the villagers views concerning the research issues above-mentioned. This enriched the findings.

It was relatively easy(but always with caution) for the researcher to solicit information from the villagers and war veterans alike by virtue of also being a beneficiary of FTLRP on the same farm, albeit in the villagized section. In this respect some data was thus collected from a participant observers' point of view since most of the experiences (like water shortages, lack of roads, and distance to clinics and schools) are shared between the respondents and the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the villagized beneficiaries under the fast-track resettlement programme(FTRP) at Beacon Kop farm ,36 respondents answered and returned questionnaires of whom 94% were male and only 5.6% were female .The ages of the respondents ranged between 15 years and 75 years.77.7% of the respondents were married, 11,5 were divorcees while the other 11.5 were widowed. Their level of education ranged between primary and tertiary. The majority (44.4%) had primary (grade 7) as their highest level of education, 11.1% had junior secondary (form 2) while 13.9% had ordinary level (form 4).Only one had advanced level (form 6) and another had a masters degree from the University of Zimbabwe.

On the war veterans section of the farm (commonly referred to as the plots), 8 plot holders were interviewed. Seven had ages ranging between 46 and 60years, one was in the 61-75 age group. All seven were married and lived with their families while the eldest one was widowed but lived with his children and other relatives. All interviewees were males. The only female beneficiary had since died from HIV and AIDS related ailments. This confirms Mgugu and Chimonyo's (2004) observation that the legislation on the access and control over natural resources in Zimbabwe is gender blind. Although women are free to apply for land under Model A1 orA2 schemes, under Model A1 women face discrimination as they are required to submit their application through the traditional leadership which is male-dominated and immune to change (Matsa and Matsa, 2010). Only one of the respondents had university education with the rest having acquired between primary level and secondary education up to ordinary level. On average, respondents from the villages as well as from the plots had six dependents each.

BENEFICIARIES’ PREPAREDNESS TO OWN LAND.

Villagized section

Most of the beneficiaries in the villagized section (55%) came from different parts of Shurugwi district. Bikita and Chirumanzu districts had 11.1% each while 5.6% each came from Guruve, Gokwe, Lower Gweru and Bulawayo. Only 2 (another 5.6% of the total) were former farm workers at Beacon Kop farm. 77.7% of the respondents never owned land in their respective districts of origin while only 22,2% owned land but said they abandoned it because it had become too exhausted to give sufficient yields for their ever-growing families. It is against this background that 94. 4% of the respondents conceded that they decided to seek land at Beacon Kop because they wanted prime land for more rewarding farming. 5.5% of the respondents, however, sought land mainly because they wanted to pan for gold since the farm also has some known gold deposits.

Table 1a Draft power owned by villagized farmers at Beacon Kop farm. N=36

| Number of cattle | No. of farmers | Percentage |
|------------------|----------------|------------|
| 0 | 12 | 33.3 |
| 1-2 | 8 | 22.2 |
| 3-4 | 10 | 27.8 |
| 5-6 | 2 | 5.5 |
| 7+ | 4 | 11.1 |

Cattle are the major form of draft power in Zimbabwe’s communal and resettlement areas. For a farmer to be qualified as successful he or she has to have cattle, especially healthy, strong oxen which are considered most powerful and therefore dependable. Table 1a shows that 33.35 of the farmers at Beacon Kop villagized section don’t have any form of draught power. This means they cannot plan and execute their farming activities as they wish as they depend on their counterparts who have cattle. However, even those with cattle don’t have enough as it can be seen (Table 1a) that only 4 farmers have more than 7 head of cattle. If we take into account the fact that some of these cattle are in fact calves and others are the weaker or calving cows then the severity of the inadequacy of draught power in the resettlement area becomes accentuated.

Table 1b Farm implements owned by villagized resettlement farmers at Beacon Kop farm. N=36

| Farm implement | No. of farmers who own it | Percentage |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Plough | 26 | 72.2 |
| Hoe | 36 | 100 |
| Scotch-cart | 7 | 19.4 |
| Harrow | 3 | 8.3 |
| Cultivator | 4 | 11.1 |
| Planter | 2 | 2.7 |
| Truck | 2 | 5.6 |

Table 1b shows some important basic implements for reasonable production to take place on subsistence farms. All farmers on the villagized section have hoes mainly because these are home-made and therefore cheaper to acquire. However, the fact that some farmers (27.8%) do not have ploughs is cause for concern given the importance of this implement in the tilling of the land. Scotch-carts (owned by only 19.4%) are also an essential mode of transport for farmers in their day-to-day farming activities on and off the field. It is therefore important that more farmers have scotch-carts for more production and ease of work. Group discussions revealed the farmers wishes and aspirations to have an adequacy of both draught power and these other essential farm implements. Many hoped to gradually buy these as and when they realize good harvests some of which they can sell to the market for cash. The only farmer who owns a truck is a renowned gold buyer who is just masquerading as a farmer in this community.

War Veterans section (The plots)

50% of the respondents originally came from Shurugwi district while 25% each came from Buhera and Mutare respectively. All respondents never owned land in their respective districts of origin (or anywhere for that matter) and thus they emphatically said they wanted land for farming and this is the reason why they went to war to liberate the country from British colonial oppression.

Table 2a Draught power owned by war veterans at Beacon Kop farm. N=8

| Number of cattle | No. of farmers | Percentage |
|------------------|----------------|------------|
| 0 | - | - |
| 1-2 | - | - |
| 3-4 | - | - |
| 5-6 | 2 | 25 |
| 7+ | 6 | 75 |

On the war veterans plots the draft power situation is not as discouraging as the villagized section since more than 75% of the plot holders own more than 7 head of cattle each (Table 2a). Observations on the farm revealed that some of the plot-holders have cattle heads of between 15 and 40. This gives them a competitive advantage over their villagized counterparts. Since the war veterans were in the forefront of land occupation and redistribution, in the process they managed to acquire some of these cattle cheaply as the former commercial white farmers left in a huff (others just kept some of the cattle which strayed onto their new plots from surrounding farms).

Table 2b Farm implements owned by plot farmers at Beacon Kop farm. N=36

| Farm implement | No. of farmers who own it | Percentage |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Plough | 8 | 100 |
| Hoe | 8 | 100 |
| Tractors | 2 | 25 |
| Scotch-cart | 4 | 50 |
| Cultivator | 2 | 25 |
| Planter | - | - |
| Harrow | 6 | 75 |
| Truck | 1 | 12.5 |

Plot farmers (war veterans) at Beacon Kop comparatively have more implements compared to the villagized section with all of them (100%) having ploughs and hoes, 50% have harrows and 25% have tractors and cultivators respectively (Table 2b). They are therefore in a better position to produce. Interviews with these farmers revealed their desire to go full-scale into commercial beef production, intensive crop production as well as small-scale dairy farming. They however cited lack of funds to buy inputs such as tractors; cattle feed combine harvesters among others as their biggest limitation.

Beneficiaries production levels from 2000-2009

Maize is the staple crop in Zimbabwe and the country's food security is mainly measured against maize production levels both at household and national levels.

Table 3. Percentage Maize production levels in villagized section per year (2000-2009) N=36

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Enough for family for year | 0 | 5.5 | 2.7 | 33.3 | 38.8 | 38.8 | 33.3 | 38.8 | 2.7 | 38.8 |
| Enough for family for a year and surplus for sale | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.7 | 0 | 11.1 | 0 | 16.7 |
| Not enough till next harvest | 100 | 94.4 | 97.2 | 66.6 | 61.1 | 58.3 | 66.6 | 50 | 97.2 | 44.4 |

Maize production levels in the villagized section of Beacon Kop show a serious deficit in the ten year period that the framers have been settled there (Table 3). At best only 38.8% of the farmers managed harvests enough to feed their families for a year in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2009. However, even at this level of production, 61.1% of the farmers did not manage a yield enough to last their families till the next harvest in 2004, 50% in 2007 and 44.4% in 2009. The worst years for the villagized farmers were 2000, 2002 and 2008 when 100%, 97.2 and, 97.2% of them respectively failed to harvest enough to last a period of 12 months. Only 2009 was comparatively a good year when although 44.4% failed to yield enough till the next harvest, 16.7% of the farmers harvested enough for their families for a year and also some surplus for sale.

Table 4. Percentage Maize production levels on war veterans plots per year (2000-2009) N=8

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Enough for family for year | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 75 | 75 | 75 | 50 | 0 | 50 |
| Enough for family for a year and surplus for sale | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 50 | 0 | 50 |
| Not enough for family till next harvest | 100 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 |

Table 4 shows that on the war veterans' plots from 2000 to 2002 there was virtually no production enough to last families till the next harvest. This is mainly because initially the war veterans, like the villagized farmers, did not have any resources to start serious production. The veterans also had not quite settled as they were still heavily involved in the acquisition and demarcation of farms as well as the resettling of new farmers throughout the district. The 2000 cyclone Eline induced floods and the 2001 drought also significantly contributed to the poor agricultural performance.

Between 2003 up to 2009, all respondents managed to harvest enough to feed their families for a 12 month period or till the next harvest. This is mainly because there was general calmness on the farm and these new farmers were concentrating more on farming. Most of them had relocated from towns and were operating from their new plots. Production was also aided by the government's subsidized tillage and farm input scheme which also provided them with seed and fertilizers. Some farmers had also started acquiring cattle (some of which were abandoned by the fleeing white farmers) and other farming implements. Year 2008 however was a bad year for both farmers on the plots as well as farmers in the villages mainly because it was a drought year. The year was also the peak of the country's socio-economic and political crisis and the hyperinflationary period (2000-February 2009). This resulted in scarcity of almost all commodities, including farm inputs. Although the war veterans' plots have the capacity to produce both crops and livestock commercially because of their larger sizes, maize production results between 2000-2009 shows that meaningful production was only recorded in 2007 and 2009 when 50% of the farmers managed to produce some surplus for sale. Year 2007 received good rains and the political climate, though simmering, had not yet exploded. The increase in production in 2009 was a result of the political calmness brought about by the Government of National Unity (February 2009) following the signing of the Global Political Agreement of September 2008 by the major political parties, namely the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front [ZANU(PF)] and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) factions. The introduction of the multi-currency regime also brought stability to the economy and most commodities, including farm inputs, which had disappeared during the hyperinflationary period resurfaced, hence farmers were thus better equipped.

Table 5: Quality of life at Beacon Kop Resettlement. Villagized N=36 Plots N= 8

| | IMPROVED | | | | DECLINED | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----|-------|-----|------------|----|-------|-----|
| | villagized | % | plots | % | villagized | % | plots | % |
| Water quality/accessibility | 11 | 31 | 8 | 100 | 25 | 69 | 0 | 0 |
| Fuel availability | 36 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Food production /availability | 14 | 39 | 8 | 100 | 22 | 61 | 0 | 0 |
| Transport to nearest urban center | 8 | 22 | 4 | 50 | 28 | 78 | 4 | 50 |
| Closeness to primary school | 2 | 6 | 2 | 25 | 34 | 94 | 6 | 75 |
| Closeness to secondary school | 2 | 6 | 2 | 25 | 34 | 94 | 6 | 75 |
| Closeness to rural service center | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 94 | 8 | 100 |
| Closeness to clinic | 4 | 11 | 4 | 50 | 32 | 89 | 4 | 50 |

Thirty-one percent of the respondents in the villagized section reported that both water quality and accessibility has improved while 69% observed a decline (Table 5). This is mainly because Beacon Kop farm is a relatively dry area with no river of significance passing through it. Those who report an improvement in water quality may have come from even drier areas, are settled close to the wetter parts of the former commercial farm or are those who have managed to dig out protected wells at their homes. No community boreholes are yet in place at Beacon Kop farm. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other donor agencies shun these fast-tracked resettled farmers as they perceive the process was done unjustly. They still consider such areas as ‘contested land’. In a speech to open the fifth parliament of Zimbabwe in July 2002 President Mugabe however scoffed at these NGOs declaring that Zimbabweans should not be hoodwinked by ‘suspicious’ foreign handouts:

“Government will not surrender to sinister interests which seek surreptitiously to advance themselves under cover of humanitarian involvement.”

The government’s meager resources however don’t suffice to cater for the country’s basic and essential requirements like electricity and the resuscitation of industries, let alone addressing the welfare of resettled farmers. All respondents on the war veterans’ plots however reported an improvement in both water quality and accessibility. These respondents have all managed to dig out protected wells at their homesteads.

Wood is the most commonly used fuel at Beacon Kop and because former white commercial farms were privately owned, natural resources including trees were well conserved and are still in abundance. All respondents thus reported an improvement in wood fuel availability compared to where they came from where resources had generally depleted.

The major reason why people sought land for resettlement was food. Although all farmers on the plots (war veterans section) reported an improvement in food production and availability, in comparison only 39% of the villagized farmers reported the same, while 61% of them reported that both food production and availability was better in their areas of origin than from their new plots at Beacon Kop.

Transport is another problem at Beacon Kop. The settlement is almost equidistant from Gweru (the provincial capital) and Shurugwi (the nearest mining town). The main road to two urban centres is 12km away on average. 78% of the villagized farmers reported a decline in transport availability to the nearest urban centre(s) with only 22% reporting an improvement. 50% of the plot holders, however believe that transport to the nearest urban centre(s) from their new plots at Beacon Kop is an improvement from that of their villages of origin while the other 50% object. The reason for the apparent difference in responses between the villagized and plot sections is because war veterans are settled much closer to the main road compared to the villages which are much deeper in to the farm and away from the main road linking Gweru and Shurugwi.

Ninety-four percent of the villagers reported that both the nearest primary and secondary schools were further from Beacon Kop than they were from their homes of origin. 75% of the plot holders also reported the same. This shows the remote nature of the new settlements and highlights the acuteness of the problems that the newly-resettled farmers' children have to endure. The nearest primary school, Guinea Fowl and the nearest secondary school, Guinea Fowl High school are both about 12km away on average.

Rural service centres in Zimbabwe provide essential services to rural communities, for example, health services, a bus station or market for farmers' agricultural products while growth points (growth poles) normally assume administrative functions for the district. Local government is done from these centres and local councils operate from there. Despite the importance of these centres, 94% of the villagers and 100% of the plot holders respectively conceded that there is a decline in closeness of these services from Beacon Kop than from their villages of origin. The nearest growth point is Tongogara, some 55km away and this is where these farmers collect government supplied services like farm inputs (e.g. seed and fertilizers) and also where they pay their tax among other things. It's expensive for the villagers to travel to this district administrative centre. The smaller business centres which provide low order services like bread, beer, meat and other such services are along the Gweru-Shurugwi road, some 12 km away from the villages on average, which is also far given that the common means of transport for the villagers is by foot.

Chikwingwizha clinic at the Roman Catholic-run Chikwingwizha Seminary some 13 km is the nearest health centre for the newly resettled farmers at Beacon kop. 88.8% of the villagers and 50% of the plot holders reported a decline in their quality of life in terms of proximity to a health service centre or clinic. Some conceded that deaths and miscarriages which could have been avoided have occurred because of the prohibitive distance to Chikwingwizha clinic for someone seriously sick or with labour pain.

Despite the fact that the quality of life at Beacon Kop has declined for most of the resettled villagers, 97.2% of them are proud to be landowners in their own right and do not wish to go back to their villages of origin in the communal areas. They are hopeful that given time and resources they can be more productive and self reliant. Only one respondent wished she could go back to where she came from (Bulawayo). This is because the husband, who works in Bulawayo no longer, comes home. All respondents from the war veterans' plots strongly believe that the land reform and resettlement programme is irreversible and vowed that any beneficiary who gives up land is an enemy of both the Second and the Third Chimurenga (Liberation struggles for political and economic independence respectively).

REASONS FOR POOR PRODUCTION LEVELS AT BEACON KOP FARM

Socio-economic reasons given for poor production at Beacon Kop by both villagers and plot owners include inadequate draught power and inadequacy of farming implements. They also bemoaned inadequacy of both seed and fertilizers on the market and conceded that although the government has over the years supplied these, the supply is usually very late and inadequate to make a meaningful contribution to the harvest. Political uncertainty seems not to contribute significantly in production levels as only 2.7% of the respondents from the villages cited it as having any impact with none citing it from the plots. 17% of the respondents from the villages attribute poor harvests at Beacon Kop to panning activities saying panning for gold is more lucrative than farming. This was however disputed by the majority (83%). 100% of plot holders reported inadequate manpower as contributing to poor production levels. This could be because of the large sizes of their plots which require more labour than the smaller village plots which can be sufficiently farmed by family labour. Only 33% of the villagers bemoaned labour inadequacy in the villages. A very small percentage of the respondents from the villages (0.5%) apportioned blame for poor production on absentee landlords and believe such landlords must be forced to relinquish their plots to people with the zeal to produce for the country. They said such people had no real hunger for land in the first place and could in fact be saboteurs or sell-outs planted by those opposed to the land reform and resettlement programme.

Erratic rainfall, droughts and cyclone-induced excessive rainfall and floods were the ecological causes of poor harvests cited by both villagized and plot holders at Beacon Kop. Cyclones Eline (2000) and Japhet (2003) and associated floods as well as the droughts of 2002 and 2008 were cited as having impacted very negatively on agricultural production at this new resettlement area. The farmers also revealed that the sandy soils which make up most of their fields are not productive enough without fertilizers or manure. Harvests are also significantly reduced by pests such as warthogs, hedgehogs, spring books, rats and birds.

Government has however been supportive to the newly resettled farmers at Beacon Kop since 2001 through the provision of draught power (heifer loan scheme) in which only 3 families benefited so far, free tillage, free seed and fertilizers on condition that upon harvesting, farmers will sell part of their produce to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). Some few farmers also got ploughs from the government's input loan scheme. Although such assistance was necessary, in most cases inputs supplied were too little and too late into the cropping season which rendered the whole exercise both unhelpful and wasteful as it hardly contributed to better harvests. As aforesaid elsewhere in this discussion, no assistance came from NGOs who viewed the whole fast-track land reform and resettlement programme with contempt and as a travesty of justice as it infringed on individual property rights against former commercial white farmers.

CONCLUSION

Despite the widely held view that the drivers of the FTLRP were more on the political than socio-economic side the findings of this study confirm that there was indeed hunger for the land for both the war veterans and the ordinary beneficiaries settled on the villagized section. It can however not be denied that the opportunity to get land for most of them found them ill-prepared in terms of inputs and this to a great extent explains their miserable harvests in the earlier years of the 2000 decade. The hyper-inflationary period of the mid-2000 to January 2009 coupled with the erratic and unpredictable rainfall pattern

during the period of study (2000-2009) only worsened the farmers' plight. The government was clueless as to how to rescue the situation as it had to attend to a plethora of other socio-economic, political, infrastructural and military dictates with a rapidly shrinking resource and financial base worsened by the Western-imposed economic sanctions which hit more the general populace and less the intended targets. NGOs had either withdrawn from the country in protest of what they termed bad governance or they were disinterested in the FTLRP which they had labeled criminal, unplanned and unnecessary. Basic social services at Beacon Kop are either missing or are grossly inadequate. Despite being close to both the Midlands provincial capital, Gweru and the mineral-rich mining town of Shurugwi, Beacon Kop is a typical remote area because of lack of any standard road. Both the primary and secondary schools are more than 10km away. Although the district vocational training centre is the nearest educational centre about 8km from the villages, none of the villagers children are found there because of poor results and prohibitive costs. The nearest health centre (clinic) is more than 12 km away. There are no boreholes and most people get water from unprotected wells. Basic commodities like bread, meat and sugar are a luxury few can afford. Although life is generally more difficult for the newly resettled farmers at Beacon Kop compared to where they came from, they remain very optimistic that with some land in their names, they are turning over a new leaf in life and that better days are coming. They have something to leave behind for their children at old age and death. These people are hard workers, they only lack inputs. The level of political consciousness is very high at the farm and they don't want to entertain any possibility of a reversal of the programme.

In light of the findings from this research, the following recommendations can be drawn with a view to improving life at Beacon Kop and other newly resettled farming areas throughout the country:

1. The government must make available both seed and fertilizers well before the start of the planting season so that farmers can plan with confidence and focus.
2. In order to assist farmers who do not have draught power, the government must provide loans for early tillage programmes payable after a good harvest. This would help farmers plant early and thus brighten their prospects of a better harvest.
3. Since these farmers are close to the city of Gweru which has a large market for vegetables, they should be assisted by government and other well wishers through the Ministry of Cooperative Development to venture into market gardening targeting Gweru as a ready market.
4. In the absence of NGOs, the government, through the Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities should drill boreholes for the newly resettled farmers in order to ease water problems.
5. The government must also continue to lobby the international community to accept the FTLRP as a foregone historical process which is irreversible and thus should be consolidated rather than reversed-schools, clinics and roads need to be availed not only at Beacon Kop but to the thousands of other beneficiaries of this programme countrywide who need support from both the government and NGOs for the betterment of their lives. The so-called targeted sanctions have missed their targets and are hitting most poor innocent people hence they need to be removed.

6. The government should also provide farmers with motivated Agricultural and Rural Extension (AGRITEX) officers who would assist the farmers given that some of them are new in the field of agriculture.

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