

**THE FAST TRACK LAND REFORM PROGRAMME: REFLECTING ON THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESETTLED FORMER FARM WORKERS AT FAIRFIELD FARM IN GWERU DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper uses a purposively sampled case study of Fairfield farm in Gweru district, Zimbabwe to explore the challenges and opportunities of Resettled Former Farm Workers (RFFW). Resettlement of former farm workers was done by the Government of Zimbabwe in order to promote sustainable local economic development and livelihoods. Prior to resettlement these former farm workers were living in poverty characterised by poor wages paid by white farmers. To obtain primary data the study utilised in – depth interviews on a convenient sample of 20 Resettled Former Farm Workers and participant observation. This was further complimented by secondary data from an extensive relevant literature study. The study reveals that despite the government’s noble idea of giving Former Farm Workers land so that they can pursue sustainable livelihood, the RFFW are experiencing a number of challenge that impede sustainable farm production. These include, inaccessible roads, poor water and sanitation facilities, poor harvests due to lack of capital to buy inputs and farming equipment, vulnerability to periodic droughts and floods, an insecure land tenure system and clinics and schools which are distanced and poorly resourced. Apart from the fore mentioned challenges this paper further reveals the following opportunities on the livelihood improvement for the RFFW, access to land, basic education for their kids, permanent homes, and improved lifestyles. The paper concludes by recommending that the Government of Zimbabwe should prioritise infrastructure development in newly resettled areas. Donors should be invited to build schools, clinics, roads, and bridges in newly resettled areas. Given their vulnerable and disadvantaged background RFFW need capital interventions and commercial agriculture training from the government and donors to profitably and sustainably execute their farming operations. Finally the Government of Zimbabwe should resolve the issue of insecurity of tenure in its newly resettled areas.

**Keywords:** fast track land reform programme, resettled former farm workers, challenges and opportunities.

**INTRODUCTION**

At independence; Zimbabwe inherited a racially skewed agricultural land ownership pattern where the whites who consisted of 1% of the total population owned 45% of arable agricultural land. (Government of Zimbabwe 2001). The majority population were either pauperised workers or lived in poor semi arid regions prone to incessant drought. In order to promote sustainable local economic development and improve the lives of the black majority, one of the means through which Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) sought to achieve this was by way of embarking on land redistribution through organised land reform. Land reform in this study is defined according to Berstein (2002) definition. It states that

land reform is the statutory division of agricultural land and its re-allocation to the landless people. Land reform consists of measures aimed at a more equitable and fair distribution of agricultural land for sustainable use. Posterman and Hanstad (2005) as quoted in Madebwe and Madebwe (2011) also define land reform as agrarian reforms whose purpose is to reduce socio economic marginalisation of the rural poor and other socially excluded groups by granting them access to land and formalising their control over land. In Zimbabwe the land reform programme was considered a way of redressing the colonial imbalances in land holding at the same time serving as a barometer for empowering blacks to fight poverty and underdevelopment (Matunhu 2011). The first phase of the land reform process started in 1980 and ended in 1999. This phase was slow but orderly and the mode of land acquisition was based on the principle of willing seller- willing buyer. The government viewed this land reform process as having been slow to address development challenges that the majority of people of Zimbabwe were facing. In the year 2000 the GOZ introduced the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). Under this programme the government compulsorily acquired land for equitable distribution to the black majority under the 1A and A2 models. The A1 model consists of the villagised scheme and the self contained plots. The A2 model consists of big farms for commercial production.

The FTLRP created empowerment opportunities for the blacks through increasing their chances to get and own land. It is however critical to note that white commercial farms which were designated for resettlement employed poor farm workers who subsequently lost their meagre paying jobs. Majority of the farm workers became jobless and landless and few were resettled in the designated farms. While negative effects of the land reform programme on the livelihoods of farm workers have been discussed at length, relatively little attention has been paid to the farm workers who were resettled. This article notes that FTLRP received bad publicity both in Zimbabwe and internationally. Thus little attention has been paid on the positive effects of the programme and the plight of the Resettled former farm workers (RFFW). To close this gap this article will focus on the opportunities and challenges that the FTLRP has created on livelihood improvement of RFFW at Fairfield Farm. For the purpose of this study a RFFW is a person who used to work on white commercial farms and was resettled under the FTLRP. The ultimate objective of identifying challenges RFFW are facing is to prescribe recommendations that will assist them to embark on sustainable farming to improve their livelihood.

Shumba (2011) defines a livelihood as a means by which households obtain and maintain access to essential resources to ensure their immediate and long term survival. Livelihoods are therefore people's means of survival and are fundamentally affected by the situation in which people find themselves, especially their physical, economic, social and environmental conditions. Types of livelihood assets include among others the natural resources available for example land. The second asset is physical which include the basic infrastructure available such as schools, clinics, roads and telecommunications. There are determinants which influence the means by which households obtain access to essential resources these include the geography and agro-ecology of an area, ownership of productive assets like land and inter-house relationship. This article will discuss the challenges and opportunities on sustainable livelihood for the RFFW at Fairfield farm.

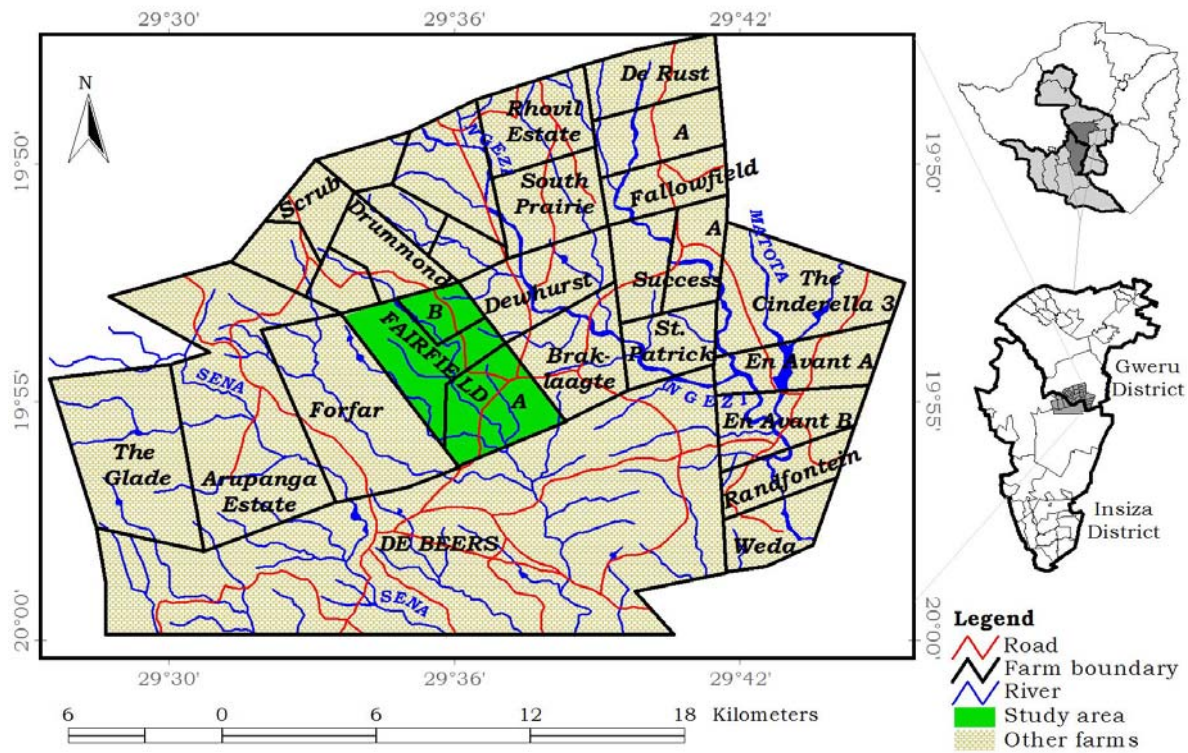
### **THE PLIGHT OF COMMERCIAL FARM WORKERS BEFORE THE FTLRP**

This article establishes that before the FTLRP commercial farm workers lived a nomadic life style, they migrated from one farm to another in search for improved remuneration. Commercial farm workers who were allowed to utilise the land for their livelihood were limited to cultivate 10 acres and to rear a maximum of 12 head of cattle. In addition farm

workers were not allowed to own immovable properties and most of them lived in temporary structures built of poll and mud thatched with grass whilst the master had permanent structures. Commercial Farm Workers as noted received meagre salaries not enough to sustain them, were housed in poor conditions, with inadequate schooling, health care and other services. They were vulnerable to arbitrary eviction in old age especially, when they were no longer able to work. (Scoones 2009) It was further noted that children of the farm workers had limited access to educational facilities as a result most of them would drop out of school prematurely to join their parents as farm labourers. Low levels of education made it difficult for the children of commercial farm workers to secure any other form of employment outside the farm.

**AREA UNDER STUDY**

Figure 1 map of Fairfield farm



Fairfield farm is situated in Somabula farming area of Gweru district in the Midlands Province (see map in figure 1) It is under the administrative jurisdiction of Vungu Rural District Council .The farm is within the agro-ecological region 111 which receives rainfall of between 500mm to 700mm per annum.The area in which this farm is located experience mid season dry spells and high temperatures. The soils at Fairfield farm are not conducive for commercial crop production, they easily succumb to water logging in the event of incessant rains and have a lower nutrient holding capacity hence the need to fertilise them more often. The savannah vegetation of tall grass and scattered trees characterise this area making it suitable for extensive livestock production and game ranching. Fairfield farm is 80km south west of the City of Gweru. Ngezi river runs along the farm and during the rainy season the river get flooded cutting off the plot holders from healthcare facilities, centres of education and from the market of their produce. Following the year 2000 FTLRP, the farm was demarcated into 58 self contained 50 hectare plots. The demarcated plots were allocated to 41 former farm workers and the remaining 17 plots benefited people of varied backgrounds from the other parts of Gweru district. The major farming activities at Fairfield farm are livestock and crop production. Majority of the plot holders at this farm are involved in livestock production, they rear goats, chicken, sheep and cattle at a small scale for family consumption.

Crops like maize and groundnuts are also grown mainly for human consumption. Plot holders however sell their excess yields to the Grain Marketing Board and their livestock, cattle in particular to city butcheries in Gweru and at Somabula cattle sales pens.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Fairfield farm was purposively sampled for this study because majority (70, 6%) of the plot holders in this farm are Former Farm Workers. Due to the low literacy level of the RFFW an interview schedule with both closed and open ended questions was utilised to collect primary data. The twenty RFFW were conveniently sampled on the basis of availability. The researcher interviewed RFFW who were found at their homesteads and who were willing to provide the data for the interviews. The interviews were complimented with an extensive relevant literature study and participant observation. The researcher lives in the same area with the RFFW, as a result he was able to observe their lives as he participated in community activities they are involved in. These activities included among others field days, dipping and vaccinating cattle and local development meetings. The researcher also observed the RFFW's homesteads, granaries, acquired properties, the clinic, the school and the roads linking the farm.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Challenges**

This article reveals the major challenges on the livelihood improvement for RFFW at Fairfield farm. The study established that former farm workers are not farming sustainably because they are experiencing the following challenges, lack of farming equipment and capital, inaccessible roads, poor health and sanitary facilities, poor harvests due to lack of inputs (seed and fertilisers), vulnerability to periodic droughts and floods, an insecure land tenure and clinics, schools and service centres which are distanced and poorly resourced.

### **Poor road network**

Road infrastructure is a key for the local economic development of an area. Rural road network has a significant effect on the distribution of facilities in rural areas and has the potential of reducing poverty. Improved rural accessibility and mobility are capable of reducing the level of poverty of rural people because the basic necessities of life such as healthcare delivery, education, postal services and customary courts will be closer to them ( Aderamo and Magaji 2010). Lack of road infrastructure cut off the RFFW to access their produce markets and their basic agriculture inputs such as seed, fertilisers and equipment. Capacity to fight poverty is thus limited; this subsequently impacts negatively on sustainable livelihood improvement for the RFFW.

This study established that the road linking Fairfield farm to the Gweru –Bulawayo main road is in a poor state. The road is not all weather purpose as vehicles get stuck in the mud during the rainy season. This situation is further aggravated by Ngezi River which gets flooded during the rainy season. No bridge was constructed across the river and when it rains incessantly it floods cutting off the residents at Fairfield farm from basic life sustaining facilities like business centres, hospitals, schools and the produce markets. The study further established that Vungu Rural District Council the responsible local authority is not servicing the road. The poor state of the road had forced transport operators to shun the area. For the past two years no form of public transport serviced residents at Fairfield farm. The bus operator who plied the route withdrew the service in 2010 sighting the poor state of the road as the major reason. This as a consequence has

promoted private transport operators who overcharge the RFFW depriving them of their hard earned cash. The private transport operators are not reliable, the days when they are not plying the route, residents at Fairfield farm foot a distance of 46km to the Gweru- Bulawayo main road. The study further established that the poor road network is hindering the RFFW to access better markets. This has given room to some unscrupulous business operators from the cities of Bulawayo and Gweru to exploit the farmers by buying their produce at very low non cost recoverable prices. This subsequently leads to low income and a fall in the living standards of the former farm workers. The poor road network has also tended to isolate the RFFW from the main stream of modern society, as the nearest school and business service centre is 12km and 31km away respectively.

### **Limited land rights**

Property rights affect economic growth in a number of ways (World Bank 2003). Secure property rights will ensure RFFW the certainty of continuous uninterrupted use of their plots, and better credit access from financial institutions to secure bank loans for investment on the plots. Despite the government having allocated land, the issue of property rights to land remain a cause of concern among RFFW at Fairfield farm. Property rights to land are one of the cornerstones for the successful functioning of modern economies. This makes well-defined, secure, and transferable rights to land central to development efforts (World Bank, 2003). Governments should enforce Property rights to land through land tenure instruments such as freehold titles, long term leases (99 year leases) and short term leases and offer letters. Rukuni (1999) recommends a basket of land rights that should be enjoyed by resettled farmers, these includes:

- *Use rights:* rights to grow crops, trees, make permanent improvement, harvest trees and fruits, and so on.
- *Transfer rights:* rights to sell, give, mortgage, lease, rent or bequeath
- *Exclusion rights:* rights to exclude others from using or transferring
- *Enforcement rights:* refer to the legal, judicial, institutional and administrative provisions to guarantee use, transfer, and exclusion rights and to resolve disputes

This study established that the RFFW at Fairfield farm were given offer letters by government as a proof that they have being allocated the 50 hectares plots. In addition a resettlement form was signed between Vungu Rural District Council and the RFFW setting out the conditions of occupation. The conditions of occupation include among others safeguarding the plots against fire, not selling or disposing the plot any other way other than surrendering it to the Vungu Rural District Council, payment of unit tax as it falls due from time to time and the right of Vungu Rural District Council to withdraw the plot without any compensation and to relocate it as it deems fit if the occupation conditions are breached. It was observed that the legal claim to land which the RFFW occupy is based on the letters offered by the Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. These offer letters can be withdrawn at any time with the government having no obligation to compensate for any improvements which the settler might have made. Further the offer letters cannot be used as collateral to obtain funds from finance houses. The RFFW cannot therefore farm sustainably as they are unable to borrow money to buy farming equipments, seed and fertiliser. Furthermore RFFW possess land but without any legal right to claim ownership as a result they remain vulnerable. Farmers with limited land rights are prone to eviction threats and this negatively impacts on productivity at the plots. Vulnerability to evictions stalls the former farm workers from maximum utilisation of land. This cloud of uncertainty which is perceived at Fairfield farm hinders the RFFW from

investing in long term projects. This consequently hinders progress on their livelihood improvement and sustainable agriculture.

**Distanced and poorly resourced health facilities**

Access to health facilities is one of the social components of sustainable development. Sustainable development can only be attained in the absence of soaring pervasiveness of incapacitating diseases. Healthy people are more productive hence investing in health is thus one of the means of stepping up development. Health facilities should be within acceptable distance of 8km if there are to be accessible to the people. This is contrary to evidence from this study which reveals that health facilities at Fairfield farm are distanced. The nearest rural health centre is at Somabula centre 33km from Fairfield farm. This is divergent to the expectation that no person should be more than 8 kilometres of walking distance of a Rural Health Centre (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare 2012). Physical access to health facilities is a challenge as residents at Fairfield farm travel 33 kilometres to reach the nearest health facility. The Rural Health Centre provide basic promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative care, concentrating on mother and child care including antenatal care, delivery of uncomplicated births, family planning, child health and nutrition, routine immunization for children and anti-tetanus immunization for child-bearing women, environmental sanitation, especially in relation to small-scale water supplies and excreta disposal systems, control of communicable diseases , other specified problems including mental illness, eye diseases and physical and mental handicap, and general curative care including oral health. Health and nutrition education form part of all the above activities. (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare 2012).The Rural Health Centre (RHC) at Somabula is staffed by two Nurses, one General Hand and one Environmental Health Technician. Complicated cases from this RHC are referred to Gweru Provincial Hospital 80km away from Fairfield farm. Distanced health centres are a threat to the lives of the RFFW at Fairfield farm as emergence cases are not attended to in time.

**Poor and inadequate water and sanitation facilities**

Borba et al (2007) define sanitation as the hygienic disposal or recycling of waste, it is an important measure to prevent the outbreak of diseases and thus protect public health and control of environmental pollution. Environmental protection is a key component of sustainable development. If human waste is properly disposed the environment which compose, the land, air and water bodies are safeguarded from pollution. In line with sustainable human development promoting good sanitation enable people to enjoy better health and physical fitness which allows them to spend more time and energy on productive activities of one form or another while the costs and expectations of poor health are reduced . This is contrary to research findings in table 1.

**Table 1 water and sanitation facilities**

**N=20**

Sanitation facility	Plots with the facility	Plots without the facility	Total
Toilets	8 (40%)	14 (60%)	20(100%)
Protected water wells	4 (20%)	16 (80%)	20 (100%)

Source field work

Research findings in table 1 reveal that RFFW at Fairfield farm have a challenge of inadequate and poor water and sanitation facilities as evidenced by 60% and 80% of the sampled plots which do not have constructed blair toilets and protected water wells respectively It was observed that households without toilets use the bush system. The bush toilet

system compromises the privacy, dignity and safety of the user. The bush toilet system is also a poor method of disposing human excreta and a threat to environmental protection. The poor disposal of human waste pollutes the environment and cause serious health problems such as diarrhoea, dysentery, worms and cholera. RFFW without protected wells on their plots said that they use unprotected water sources such as streams, rivers and shallow and poorly constructed wells. Evidence from this study reveals that RFFW share the same sources of drinking water with domestic and wild animals. When water sources are not protected they can be contaminated by human and animal excreta, resultantly creating an environment which is conducive for the spread of diseases. Unsafe water and poor sanitation plays a role in the disease/poverty cycle. Poor water and sanitation prop up sickness and diseases which lead to low productivity and subsequently poverty. Sickness and illness due to poor water and sanitation facilities impact negatively on the livelihoods of the RFFW. When people fall sick they lose income, family members spent meagre resources on treatments and may bring to an end working or attending school to care for the sick relatives. Valuable time and energy and resources are absorbed in household level –care which would otherwise be put to productive and educational care (Borba 2007).

### **Distanced and poorly resourced schools**

Distanced and poorly resourced schools are a threat to sustainable livelihood improvement for RFFW. Education is critical component of sustainable development. Investing in education is one of the key ways of moving and staying out of poverty. Education passes on knowledge, skills, attitude and values necessary to shape a sustainable future and also increases the capability of farmers to tackle environmental and developmental issues. Educated citizens find it easy to make a living and also to find jobs as compared to their uneducated counterparts. The uneducated remain marginalised from participating in the social, political and economic development of their area or country.

Evidence from this study reveal that before the FTLRP the nearest school from Fairfield farm was 31km away and was a boarding school which commercial farm workers could not afford to send their children to. RFFW at Fairfield farm are currently sending their children to Lukuluba primary and secondary schools which were established as satellite schools in the year 2000 to cater for resettled farmers. This is in agreement with the first report of the Thematic Committee on Millennium Development goals on the provision of education in resettled areas in Zimbabwe (2012) which reveals that satellite schools were established in resettled areas during the FTLRP implemented by government beginning year 2000. Previously there were no schools around commercial farms as white farmers had very small families and they either drove their children to schools far away from their farms or sent them to boarding schools. The schools which cater for children of RFFW are located at Rhovil farm homestead which is 12km away from the Fairfield farm. The teachers are accommodated in the farm house and the old dilapidated horse stables and garages are used as classrooms. The location of the schools 12 km away from Fairfield farm is not ideal for the learning process; children end up getting to school tired thus having a negative impact on their education. The challenges being experienced by the schools impact negatively on the education of the children at Fairfield farm. The challenges range from inadequate furniture and teaching equipment to high pupil dropout due to lack of interest as the children of RFFW lack the motivation to acquire higher education. Inadequate furniture subsequently leads pupils to learn while sitting on the floors or bricks. This is not a conducive environment for learning purposes. This study further established that, though the children of RFFW at Fairfield farm are provided with educational facilities, the schools are distanced and poorly resourced. This has impacted negatively on the pass rate at the schools which are also affected by high student dropout rate.

### Low maize production levels at Fairfield farm

**Table 2: average maize production levels for agricultural seasons of 2009 to 2010, 2010 to 2011 and 2011 to 2012 among RFFW at Fairfield farm**

N=20

Number of tonnes per harvest	Number plots	Percentage
Less than 1 tonne	11	55
1 – 2	3	15
2 - 4	3	15
5 -7	1	5
8-10	2	10
11 and more	Nil	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: fieldwork

The above table reveals that the average maize production levels for the last three agricultural seasons among the RFFW at Fairfield farm is low as evidenced by 55% of the sampled plots failing to produce an average annual maize production output of one tonne. This has a negative impact on food security as maize is the staple food for the residents at Fairfield farm. It was observed that the RFFW who participated in this study had an average family membership of 8 persons, and that a family of such membership consume approximately 1, 25 tonnes per year. Maize production level of less than a tonne a year will thus compromise on adequate food provision at the farm. The study further reveals that maize production among the RFFW is low because of a number of factors. The factors include unfavourable climatic conditions, Fairfield farm is not a conducive area for maize production as it occasionally experience droughts and excessive rains which lead to water logging in the fields. The RFFW lack the capital to purchase seed, farming equipment and fertiliser and this impact negatively on the production of maize at the farm. The RFFW said that they on irregular intervals benefit from seed handouts from government which are not sufficient to meet their needs. RFFW started from scratch without valuable assets and with a very weak or non existing financial base. So to boost maize production at Fairfield farm the government should infuse financial capital into the farming activities of RFFW.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Apart from the fore mentioned challenges this paper further reveals the following opportunities on the livelihood improvement for the RFFW, access to land, basic education for their kids, permanent homes, and improved lifestyles.

#### Access to land ownership

Evidence from this study reveals that the FTLRP provided an opportunity to the previously disadvantaged commercial farm workers. The allocation of 50 hectare plots to 41 former farm workers at Fairfield farm provided them an opportunity to have access and to own land. Land for most of the poor in developing countries is the primary means of generating a livelihood and a main vehicle for investing, accumulating wealth, and transferring it between generations



(World Bank 2003). Land is symbol of wealth, status, power, autonomy and a key factor for subsistence and economic activities. (FAO 1999, in Madebwe and Madebwe 2011). The poor utilise land to produce food for their households and can also generate surplus for sale. One of the objectives of land reform program in Zimbabwe is to reduce the extent and intensity of poverty among rural families and farm workers by providing them with adequate land for agriculture use (Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement report 2001). RFFW at Fairfield farm enjoy having pieces of land allocated to them by government, they utilise it for livestock and crop production. The fast track land reform programme also afforded the former commercial farm workers the opportunity build permanent homesteads contrary to the unstable and nomadic life styles in the white commercial farms. Permanent homesteads enable the RFFW to plan for the improvement of their livelihoods.

**Opportunity to own cattle and other small livestock**

**Table 3: number of cattle owned by RFFW at Fairfield farm**

Number cattle	Number of plots	Percentage
0	2	10%
1-5	2	10%
6-10	5	25%
10-15	4	20%
16-20	2	10%
21-39	3	15%
40-70	2	10%

**N=20**

**Source: field work**

Table 3 shows the number of cattle owned by RFFW at Fairfield farm as at July 2012. Fairfield farm is in Somabula a cattle producing area. The RFFW said that allocation of plots on this farm has provided them with an opportunity to take care of their own cattle without any restriction. The cattle rearing project is conducive at Fairfield farm because the farm has well fenced paddocks. Livestock production in this farm is technically supported by a Veterinary Officer who is resident in the area. Cheap basic animal drugs are available and the officer attends to sick animals upon request. A dip tank which is managed by the Department of Veterinary Services is also operational at the farm. This study further reveals that cattle rearing is a source of livelihood for the RFFW at Fairfield farm. Cattle provide food in the form of meat and milk and draught power for the fields. In addition the study established that some of the RFFW sell their beasts for cash at Somabula Cattle Auction pens and to various city butcheries in Gweru. The cash obtained from cattle sales it was revealed has improved the life styles of the RFFW. Evidence from this study reveal that some RFFW at Fairfield farm have managed to buy cell phones, radios, solar panels, bicycles, building materials, televisions, farming equipment, seed, fertilisers, vehicles and to pay school fees of their kids from the proceeds of the cattle sales. Given that the RFFW has knowledge and skills obtained from their experience as commercial farm workers; the FTLRP has presented an opportunity for them to thrive as successful beef producers if they take cattle rearing as a business.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper concludes that the FTLRP is a well received exercise among the previously disadvantaged commercial farm workers at Fairfield farm as it afforded them the opportunity to own land, to build permanent homesteads, rear own livestock and to grow own crops. The RFFW at Fairfield farm are however grappling with challenges that are an impediment to sustainable farm production. The challenges range from lack of financial capital, inaccessible roads, poor water and sanitation facilities, poor harvests due to lack of inputs (seed and fertilisers) and farming equipment/machinery, vulnerability to periodic droughts and water logging in the fields due to incessant rains, an insecure land tenure to clinics and schools which are distanced and poorly resourced. If the FTLRP is to bring in sustainable benefits to the RFFW, the GOZ should prioritise infrastructure development in newly resettlement areas. The government should invite sympathetic donors to build schools, clinics, roads, and bridges in newly resettled areas. Given their vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds RFFW need capital interventions and commercial agriculture training from the government and donors to profitably execute their farming operations. Finally the Government of Zimbabwe should resolve the issue of insecurity of tenure in its newly resettled areas.

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