

Report Part Title: Land Reform

Report Title: STATE RECONSTRUCTION IN ZIMBABWE

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3. Land Reform

In 1980, when Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain, it also inherited a colonial pattern of unequal land ownership. The provisions of the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979, which set conditions for the post-independence government, made it difficult to address speedily economic and social inequalities that had resulted from colonial and white minority rule.

In 2000, 42 percent of the country's agricultural land was controlled by about 4,500 white commercial farmers (0.03 percent of the population), while most of the black population remained landless, with only about 1.2 million black people subsisting on 41 percent of the country's total area of about 390,000 square kilometres. Land reform is therefore fundamental to Zimbabwe's long-term political stability and socio-economic development.²⁶ The significance of land lies both in its economic value and its political importance as a resource over which struggles have been waged in the colonial and post-independence eras.²⁷ Market-based land reform in Zimbabwe after 1980 failed to transform ownership patterns which have been historically skewed by the control of vast swathes of agricultural land by white colonial settlers and their heirs. The failure to tackle the issue effectively eventually led to land-based conflict in which the government of Robert Mugabe expropriated 11 million hectares held by 4,500 white commercial farmers in a compulsory land redistribution programme in 2000.²⁸ The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), which targeted about 3,000 farms for resettlement by black beneficiaries, reflected a radical shift from the more gradualist approach that had been adopted by the government between 1980 and 1996. The FTLRP's hasty implementation followed a failed referendum in February 2000 which the ZANU-PF government had hoped would grant approval for constitutional reforms that included a strengthened presidency and allowed for the institutionalisation of land acquisition without compensation.²⁹ The Movement for Democratic Change, a new political party at the time, effectively opposed the referendum and the majority of Zimbabweans voted "No" to the proposed changes. The FTLRP was a key factor that led to international sanctions being imposed on Harare by the EU, the US, Australia, and New Zealand; the loss of jobs for most farm workers; and a decline in agricultural production.

However, the land reform process also created benefits such as the acquisition of land as a resource by thousands of small and black commercial farmers.³⁰ Furthermore, while the politicisation of the land issue accelerated Zimbabwe's deepening political and economic crises after 2000, the country's implosion was also sparked by other factors. Between 2000 and 2002, Zimbabwe was one of several countries in the sub-region that faced low harvests as a result of floods and droughts.³¹ The HIV/AIDS pandemic affected the productivity of

26 See Sam Moyo and Ruth Hall, "Conflict and Land Reform in Southern Africa: How Exceptional is South Africa?" in Adekeye Adebajo, Adebayo Adedeji, and Chris Landsberg (eds.), *South Africa in Africa: The Post-Apartheid Era* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), pp. 150-176; and International Peace Institute (formerly International Peace Academy), "Democracy and Land Reform in Zimbabwe", Workshop Report, New York, 25 February 2002 (available at <http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/zimbabwe020508.pdf>).

27 International Peace Institute, "Democracy and Land Reform in Zimbabwe", p. 3.

28 See Moyo and Hall, "Conflict and Land Reform in Southern Africa"; and International Peace Institute, "Democracy and Land Reform in Zimbabwe".

29 Klaus Deininger, Hans Hoozeven, and Bill Kinsey, "Benefits and Costs of Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Implications for Southern Africa", paper presented at a conference on *Understanding Poverty and Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* organised by the Centre for the Study of African Economies, 18-19 March 2002 (available at <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2002-UPaGiSSA/papers/Hoozeven-csae2002.pdf>).

30 Sam Moyo, "Land Reform and State Reconstruction", paper presented at the CCR policy advisory group seminar *State Reconstruction in Zimbabwe*, Siavonga, Zambia, 9-10 June 2011.

31 Other countries included Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Swaziland, and Lesotho. Between 1999 and 2000, Zimbabwe experienced erratic rains, a cyclone, and flooding. Human Rights Watch, "The Politicisation of Food in Zimbabwe", *Human Rights Watch*, October 2003, Vol. 15, No. 17(A), pp. 9-10 (available at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2003/10/23/not-eligible>).

especially adult farm workers.³² Ineffective economic policies also led to a decline in productivity and destroyed prospects for a sustainable livelihood for millions of Zimbabweans. Increased poverty levels exacerbated by massive pay-offs to war veterans in 1997 fuelled popular discontent. The economy was placed under further strain by the huge costs (estimated at \$2 billion over four years until troops were withdrawn in 2002)³³ incurred by Zimbabwe's military intervention into the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998, along with Angola and Namibia. In addition, economic instability was heightened by violent attacks against political opponents and members of civil society which undermined the rule of law and eroded the legitimacy of the ruling government. The administration in Harare continues to grapple with the challenge of defining a land-use system that can guarantee security of tenure and collateral value, while ensuring a more equitable distribution of land. Zimbabwe failed to secure international support for its land reform programme. The 1998 Land Donor Conference, which was organised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was widely seen as a missed opportunity for implementing effective land redistribution. Unfortunately, agreements on a government resettlement programme, a provision for testing alternative private sector programmes, and plans for the establishment of a task force of government and donor representatives, were not implemented due to political differences between the governments of Britain and Zimbabwe over the country's land acquisition strategy and macroeconomic policy.³⁴ After the Zimbabwean government agreed to some recommendations made by the UNDP Technical Mission of 2000, years of negotiations to support the country's land reform process involving the UNDP failed to yield positive results and the Programme's report was rejected by the government in 2001.³⁵

In addition to the issue of reforming land ownership patterns, the agricultural sector has faced a range of other key challenges. The trade of Zimbabwean farm products continues to be threatened by the terms of the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs); by the potential outcomes of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Doha Development Round which started in 2001,³⁶ by food commodity speculation; by international lending and aid constraints; and by the neo-liberal regionalism adopted by SADC and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of 2001.³⁷ Internally, Zimbabwean farmers have also been left vulnerable to unfair competition from Brazilian, Argentinian, Chilean, and Canadian farmers due to a lack of effective state protection and support from Harare. Several domestic measures have also proved counter-productive: government policies, for example, allow the duty-free importation of basic commodities such as maize and cooking oil, when local production of these commodities could have created substantial economic benefits.³⁸

32 An estimated 13 million Zimbabweans are reported to be living with HIV/AIDS. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Humanitarian Action Report 2008: Zimbabwe" (available at http://www.unicef.org/har08/files/har08_Zimbabwe_countrychapter.pdf).

33 Jacob Chikuhwa, *A Crisis of Governance: Zimbabwe* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), p. 274.

34 An estimated £75 million and \$200 million were pledged in relation to the Lancaster House Agreement, and other sums were later promised during negotiations led by the UNDP. Margaret Lee, "The Western Response to the Crisis in Zimbabwe", Working Paper No. 3, 2003, Centre for Development and the Environment, Oslo, p. 5. (available at http://www.kubatana.net/docs/opin/lee_western_response_to_zim_crisis_030330.pdf); see also Embassy of Zimbabwe, Sweden, "Background to Land Reform in Zimbabwe" (available at <http://www.zimbembassy.se/documents/Land.pdf>).

35 Sam Moyo, "Neoliberalisation of the Land Question in Southern Africa", in Chris Landsberg and Shaun Mackay (eds.), *Southern Africa Post-Apartheid? The Search for Democratic Governance* (Cape Town: Centre for Policy Studies, Institute for Democracy in Africa, and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2004), p. 183. The UNDP at the onset of the crisis had also mediated on land issues between Zimbabwe and Britain, unveiling plans for gradual, controlled land reform in Zimbabwe. Britain during this mediation pledged to finance legal land distribution in Zimbabwe, but refused to fund the programme, blaming the actions of the Mugabe regime.

36 Ian Fergusson, "World Trade Organization (WTO) Negotiations: The Doha Development Agenda", Congressional Research Service, July 2006 (available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/69477.pdf>); see also Antoine Bouët and David Laborde, "The Potential Cost of a Failed Doha Round", International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), July 2009 (available at <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifripd00886.pdf>).

37 Moyo, "Land Reform and State Reconstruction".

38 Crispin Sukume, "Agricultural Policy Issues", paper presented at the CCR policy advisory group seminar *State Reconstruction in Zimbabwe*, Siavonga, Zambia, 9-10 June 2011.

Increased Chinese involvement in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector has also become an important development in recent years. China is Zimbabwe's second largest investor and trading partner after South Africa. In 2011, China's Development Bank announced plans to fund investments worth \$10 billion in Zimbabwe's mining, agriculture, and infrastructure sectors.³⁹ Beijing thus threw a lifeline to Zimbabwe's agricultural sector: China is the largest consumer of Zimbabwean tobacco, and also imports much of its cotton.⁴⁰

Land reform remains a key development issue for addressing poverty in Zimbabwe. Eighty percent of the nation's food is produced by smallholders. The 2008 GPA recognised that disputes over land – as well as differences over issues such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, and democratic governance – have been central to much of Zimbabwe's recent conflicts. In addition, the country's land reform process holds important lessons for neighbouring countries such as Namibia and South Africa, where politically controversial land redistribution has been underway since 1990 and 1994 respectively.



ABOVE: Dr Tendai Murisa, Coordinator, Trust Africa, Dakar, Senegal
MIDDLE: Professor Sam Moyo, Executive Director, African Institute for Agrarian Studies, Harare, Zimbabwe
RIGHT: Dr Crispin Sukume, Independent Consultant, Harare, Zimbabwe

39 Agence France-Presse (AFP), "Zim Hikes Mining Exploration Fees To \$1m", *Mail and Guardian* online, 9 February 2011 (available at <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-02-09-zim-hikes-mining-exploration-fees-to-1m>).

40 Lloyd Sachikonye, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Agenda? Zimbabwe-China Relations", in Kweku Ampiah and Sanusha Naidu (eds.), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon? Africa and China* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), pp. 124-137.