

THE IMPACT OF THE 2000 LAND REFORM PROGRAMME ON THE CAPITAL BLOCK, POPULARLY KNOWN AS THE 'NEW MALAWI'

The impact of the 2000 land reform programme

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ABSTRACT

The 2000 land reform programme implemented by the government of Zimbabwe came with an initiative of acquiring enormous hectares of white-owned farmland and distributing it on a massive scale to small-scale farmers. Indeed the greater part of the land was taken from the white commercial farmers and distributed to the majority black Zimbabweans, leaving only a small share of the farmland in the hands of the whites. The land reform programme, undoubtedly, benefited Zimbabweans. In Zimbabwe, especially in mining areas, there are classes of Zimbabweans, those who originate from Zimbabwe, as well as those who are of foreign origin, but are Zimbabweans by birth. Zimbabweans by birth who are of foreign origin occupied an allocated A2 farm, Capital Block, located near a cement mining area, Colleen Bawn. Most of them were of Malawian origin, and the area is now popularly known as 'New Malawi'. This study sought to investigate how Zimbabweans of foreign origin benefited from the 2000 land reform programme. The article further sought to reveal the diverse farming systems as well as Indigenous Knowledge (IK), which were passed on from the forefathers who were born in Malawi, but migrated to Zimbabwe's mining areas in search for employment in the then Rhodesia around 1960. A qualitative methodology was used in this research, in which oral history interviews were conducted with the people living in the area of the 'New Malawi'. The study revealed that most of the land was being used for farming purposes. Beneficiaries of the programme had become self-dependent. The study further revealed that there was knowledge sharing among the beneficiaries of different foreign origins including Zambia,

Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana and those of Zimbabwean origin. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the programme benefited a number of people of foreign origins who were now Zimbabweans by birth and Zimbabweans by both birth and origin were happy with these people benefiting, a situation which shows the extent to which Zimbabweans are tolerant of foreigners.

Keywords: Land reform, foreign origin, New Malawi

INTRODUCTION

In narrating the history of the land issue in Zimbabwe, the Embassy of Zimbabwe (n.d.) points to the fact that the advent of the European settler occupation of Zimbabwe in September 1890 was the genesis of the dispossession of blacks of their land. The 1893 invasion of the Ndebele Kingdom, leading to the creation of the Gwaai and Shangani reserves; the 1896–1897 Shona and Ndebele first Chimurenga/Imfazwe (war of liberation); the nationalist struggle in the period before and after the Second World War; the second Chimurenga/Imfazwe, which gave birth to the independent Zimbabwe in 1980; the contentious Lancaster House Constitutional negotiations and the Agreement in 1979; and the current internal political developments, all bear testimony to the centrality of the land issue in the country's history.

The land reform programme, which was launched around July 2000, was designed to be undertaken in an accelerated manner and with reliance on domestic resources. The programme was a fundamental departure from previous philosophy, practices and procedures of acquiring land and resettling people. The land reform that was rolled out in Zimbabwe in 2000 resulted in a major reconfiguration of land ownership. Over 7 million hectares of land were transferred to both small-scale farm units (the A1 model) and larger farms (the A2 model) (Rukuni 2012: 2). Zimbabwe, like many other countries in Africa and beyond, has had footprints of colonialism marked all over. Vast amounts of land had been in the hands of colonial settlers, and at some point, there was a need to redress this imbalance. Rukuni (2012: 2) states that from 2000 to 2008, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme took place. By 1997, only 20 per cent of the large-scale commercial farm land had been redistributed (Rukuni, 2012: 2). The speedier Fast Track programme led to mass land expropriation based on compulsory acquisition, which was stimulated and accompanied by land occupations led by war veterans and supported by the state, but mobilising various social classes (Rukuni 2012: 2).

During this phase, land was acquired in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act (20.10) as amended. The following categories of land were targeted for acquisition:

- Derelict, and under-utilised land;
- Land under multiple ownership;
- Foreign owned land; and
- Land contiguous to communal areas (Embassy of Zimbabwe n.d.)

Furthermore, Chitsike (2003) professes that the majority of the black population practised farming in the lower rainfall and poorer soil areas, whereas the whites farmed in high rainfall and rich soils. This dual structure of land ownership was a result of various pieces of legislation introduced during the colonial era, which resulted in mass expropriation of prime agricultural land by the colonial settlers and the subsequent marginalization of black people into reserves now known as communal areas (Chitsike 2003: 2). The issue of access to land was therefore a major rallying point that led to the war of liberation. After protracted negotiations between the liberation armies and the newly elected Conservative Party government led by Margaret Thatcher, the Lancaster House Agreement was finally reached (Chitsike 2003: 2).

ON MIGRATION

Archeological evidence suggests that approximately 2000 years ago, new groups of people began to arrive in Zimbabwe from the north, although numerous groups of people migrated into Zimbabwe from the north over a period of 1 500 years and these migrations are often lumped together and referred to as the Bantu Migrations (The African Studies Centre and the MATRIX Digital Humanities Centre n.d.). History therefore, is reflective of the fact that most of the tribes based in Zimbabwe today migrated from other areas into the nation of Zimbabwe.

Cruch et al. (2005) reveals that southern Africa has a long history of intra-regional migration dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Migration was probably the single most important factor tying together all the various colonies and countries of the subcontinent into a single regional labour market during the twentieth century. Tevera and Zinyawa (2002: 2) point to the fact that Zimbabwe was a recipient of labour migrants from countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. At the time of the 1951 census, there were 246 000 foreign Africans in Zimbabwe (40% of them from Mozambique) (Tevera and Zinyawa 2002: 2). After having settled in mining areas as mineworkers and gold panners, foreigners married and established families and homes. The children born in Zimbabwe thus became citizens by birth and were entitled to rights that include land. With the demise of the industry, mining included, some of these migrants together with locals were retrenched and in the year 2000 the land reform programme was rolled out. In areas such as Colleen Bawn, a mining area in Gwanda, which is dominated by Zimbabweans of foreign origin, an open call was made for registration for the land now popularly known as 'New Malawi'. These people registered and were given land, which they are now occupying and utilising to fend for their families.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Traditional Leaders Act (29.17) of 2000 provides for the appointment of traditional leadership, that is, chiefs, headmen, village heads, and other subsidiary functionaries such as the village assembly, and spells out their duties, functions and powers. In terms

of Section 23, all communal land is to be surveyed and boundaries drawn demarcating each village. Each village shall then be issued a village registration certificate describing its boundaries. The Rural District Council will be required to prepare a land use plan for each village and shall issue a settlement permit to the head of each household in the village.

The communal land is administered under the Traditional Leaders Act of 2000 and the Communal Land Act of 1982. The Chief of an area is given overall responsibility of allocating land through traditional leaders. For Stewart et al. (1997: 56), the criteria and principles governing allocation and granting of resettlement land are not specified in any law. Similarly, the rights and obligations of resettled people were not contained in any law. The respondents in 'New Malawi' highlighted the fact that there was an open call for people who wanted farming land targeting people from Colleen Bawn and Jessie Mine. The interviews revealed that most of the people of foreign origin responded and registered for the land. The occupation of this area by Zimbabweans of foreign origin resulted in that area being nicknamed 'New Malawi'. Respondents pointed out that there was no discrimination towards 'foreigners' in the land redistribution in Zimbabwe.

RESETTLEMENT MODELS

In the fast track phase, two resettlement models were used, Model A1 and Model A2 (*The Herald* 2003: 9). Model A1 was intended as decongesting communal lands. Settler selection and emplacement for A1 were the responsibility of the Provincial Land Identification Committee (PLIC) and District Land Identification Committees (DLICs) (*The Herald* 29 October 2003). The Governor chaired the PLIC while the District Administrators (Das) chaired the DLICs. According to *The Herald* (29 October 2003), the model was for the generality of landless people, with a *villagised* and self-contained variant. The acquired farm was to be divided into a number of villages whereby a village was to be further divided into residential, arable and grazing land (*The Herald* 29 October 2003). The government was to provide a borehole for every 20 to 25 families, a clinic for 500 families, a dip tank for 1 400 head of cattle and a blur toilet per household.

This model was to be the largest. Model A2 was aimed at creating a cadre of black commercial farmers and was based on the concept of full cost recovery from the beneficiary (*The Herald* 29 October 2003). Settler selection was made on the basis of applications submitted to the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. It was a commercial resettlement scheme, comprising small-, medium- and large-scale commercial resettlement (*The Herald* 29 October 2003). The acquired farm was subdivided in such a way that each farmer was allocated a self-contained unit with varying sizes. The land would be divided into residential, grazing and arable land (*The Herald* 29 October 2003).

DID ZIMBABWEANS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN DESERVE TO BE ALLOCATED LAND?

With the recent xenophobic attacks on Zimbabweans and other nationals in South Africa, one would be tempted to ask if Zimbabweans of foreign origin deserved land allocated to them. The answer to that is yes. The interviews showed that some of them participated in the liberation struggle and they are war veterans. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 19) Act, 2008 states the following:

There is a common Zimbabwean citizenship and all citizens are equal, that is to say citizens are entitled, subject to this Constitution, to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship and are subject to the duties and obligations of citizenship.

In the constitution, subsection 4 stipulates that Zimbabwean citizenship may be acquired by birth, descent or registration. Zimbabweans of foreign origin who were allocated land have identification documents to prove their registration as Zimbabweans. Therefore, they were entitled to the land as they are lawful citizens of Zimbabwe. The land reform programme in Zimbabwe has thus not only benefited Zimbabweans by birth and origin, but also Zimbabweans of foreign origins from countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana.

The legal framework, the government and people of Zimbabwe, through the land reform, showed tolerance and solidarity towards Africans. In certain xenophobic set-ups, the foreign-origin citizens' right to land would have been questioned. Thus, this is reflective of the fact that the land issue is not only a Zimbabwean problem, but an African problem.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'NEW MALAWI'

The area known as 'New Malawi' was established when a councillor in Colleen Bawn pressed for the need for government to allocate land to miners who were employed at Colleen Bawn mine and Jessie Mine in Gwanda. Following the councillor's call, an A2 farm was divided into 32 stands, which have an average of 4.5 acres of farming land per homestead. Of the 32 stands, 16 were dedicated to miners from Colleen Bawn and the other 16 to miners who were based in Jessie Mine. Employees in the two mining towns were given opportunities to register land on a first come first serve basis. This call for registration did not attract every employee as some of them were skeptical about the whole land reform exercise, coupled with an unstable economic and political environment. This saw just a few people, mostly of foreign origin, registering for land that was successfully allocated to them.

In the oral history interviews conducted, it emerged that the farmland, which was being distributed to the miners, was previously owned by a white farmer. An arrangement was made between the white farmer and the government whereby this farm was divided

into two, with half the land being shared between the resettled farmers while the other half remained with the white owner.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To establish the extent to which the year 2000 Land reform programme in Zimbabwe benefited Zimbabwean citizens of foreign origins; and
2. To find out the benefits of the land reform programme to resettled farmers in the 'New Malawi'.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How did the 2000 land reform programme in Zimbabwe benefit Zimbabweans of foreign origin?
2. How did the land reform programme benefit the farmers resettled at the 'New Malawi'?

METHODOLOGY

Kothari (2004: 31) points out that a good research design should be 'flexible, appropriate, efficient and economical'. This study was qualitative in nature and a case study of the New Malawi was conducted. The qualitative research methodology allows the subjects being studied to give much richer answers to questions posed to them by the researcher, and may give valuable insights that might have been missed by any other method. This was evident in the present research as it facilitated an in-depth understanding of how the occupants of the 'New Malawi' benefited from the resettlement exercise.

The New Malawi community has 32 homesteads and representatives from 10 homesteads were interviewed, targeting heads of families. Of the 10 interviewees, six were Zimbabweans by birth but of foreign origin, while four were Zimbabweans by birth and origin. The study population was split into two categories. The first category comprised Zimbabweans by both origin and birth, and the second one comprised Zimbabweans by birth but of foreign origin. Among those who were Zimbabweans only by birth yet with roots outside the country, were Malawians, Zambians, Tswanas and Mozambicans.

Two sampling methods were employed, that is, either purposive or snowball. Purposive sampling was used to identify the first informants, that is, both Zimbabweans by birth and origin, and Zimbabweans by birth but of foreign origin. These first informants then referred the researchers to other similar respondents through snowballing. Identifying the first informants was easy as one of the researchers is from the 'New Malawi'. Different interview guides were prepared for each category of respondents as described above. Although the interview guides contained structured questions, the interviewers were flexible and allowed additional contributions from the interviewees.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study sought views of individuals in the 'New Malawi' who benefited from the land reform exercise through interviews. The researchers sought permission to conduct the study from the *sobhuku* of the village (New Malawi), which was successfully granted. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and of anonymity in the presentation of data. It was easy for the researchers to gain access to the community since one of them originated from there.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following sections focus on presentation, and discussion of data that was gathered through the interviews.

Land utilisation in New Malawi

Narrations from the respondents revealed that land utilisation in the 'New Malawi' was mainly for agricultural activities, which include crop production and animal husbandry. As each homestead is allocated an average of 4.5 acres farming land, the respondents revealed that they mainly use the land for planting maize, ground nuts, round nuts, sweet potatoes, water melons and sugar cane. The crop receiving the greatest attention is maize, which happens to be the staple food for Zimbabwe. However, the respondents showed concerns over the challenges that have been faced over the past years, including the previous season where rainfall in the region was quite minimal, not to mention the shortage of agricultural input.

Thus, as compared with the previous years, it has not been possible to plough the whole 4.5 acres of land as it would seem to be rather a fruitless effort, after having planted with the rains being insufficient for the crops to give meaningful harvests. Respondents revealed that, all things being equal, receiving adequate land, each homestead can produce an average of 50 bags of 20kgs each, which are sufficient for the whole family for over a year, as well as selling and sharing with relatives who live in areas that experience challenges in rainfall levels. Furthermore, respondents revealed that the agricultural activities over the years have been great, with adequate rain, such that in 2011, the *Sunday News* captured the farming activities of the 'New Malawi' community, which was greatly appreciated for contributing to the national food basket. In light of this, the 'New Malawi' has some of its farmers as representatives of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union, which aims to enhance farming activities in the 'New Malawi'.

Respondents revealed that as an alternative, it would be better to actually do away with the planting of maize and focus on drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and rapoko. However, further concerns were raised that these crops are labour intensive vis-à-vis other crops because farmers have to deal with birds, which can cause havoc to

such crops. Such concerns therefore determine what the farmers plant as there is a need to decide carefully on the type of crop to plant and the labour associated with each crop.

The 'New Malawi' is located in region five of Zimbabwe's climatic regions, where the area is well known for its suitability for cattle ranching. Narrations revealed that animal husbandry, with specialisation in cattle breeding, was relevant to the area. However, considering the current distribution of rainfall, which has a negative effect on the development of grazing lands, some respondents have resorted to pen feeding, in which farmers buy specific cow food and feed their cattle from the kraals. The concept of pen feeding is very appealing to the residents of the 'New Malawi' as some of the respondents on average sell 30–40 beasts per year, which are a result of pen feeding. Thus, pen feeding does not only solve the challenges faced with regards to grazing land but also challenges posed by thieves as well as wild animals such as hyenas, which feed on cattle and goats. With pen feeding, animals are kept within the vicinity of the farmers homestead, enhancing their safety and livelihood.

HOW ZIMBABWEANS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN HAVE BENEFITED

Most Zimbabweans of foreign origin who benefited in 'New Malawi' were gold panners, mine workers and some had been retrenched. When they were allocated land, they were elevated to commercial farmers. Some of the respondents highlighted that they were into cattle ranching and selling between thirty to forty heads of cattle every year. The land reform has been a blessing to them as they are now self-sufficient and able to provide for their families.

Many questions therefore arise: are we not going to face a situation whereby locals will revolt over the distribution of land to foreigners? Who is more entitled to the land, the Zimbabwean by descent or the Zimbabwean of foreign origin? Can countries such as South Africa, with the recent xenophobic attacks, learn something from Zimbabwe? What difference is there between white Zimbabweans of foreign origin and black Zimbabweans of foreign origin? Who are more Zimbabwean than the other, the Ndebeles, the Shonas, Zimbabweans of foreign origin, minority groups or Whites? Who determines the level of 'Zimbabweanness'?

Knowledge sharing at 'New Malawi'

Narrations from the respondents revealed that the knowledge they use for farming was transferred to them from their forefathers. One of the respondents originally came from Malawi in 1956 and started working in various areas before settling in Colleen Bawn and finally in the 'New Malawi' in 2003. The respondent indicated that in Malawi, they used to farm rice, beans and pumpkin. However, he expressed the view that with the rainfall levels present in this region, it is impossible to plant rice, thus, the region barely allows cultivation of maize now. Knowledge sharing at the 'New Malawi' is highly facilitated by Agricultural Extension Officers (AEO), who are specialists in agriculture. They carry

out programmes aimed at mentoring local farmers whereby advice is rendered as to what type of crops to plant, when to plant them and how to plant them. Thus, this platform has greatly improved knowledge sharing in terms of crop production as well as animal husbandry. However, respondents expressed the need for more interaction between the residents of the 'New Malawi' in order to establish a vibrant platform to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Views about 'New Malawi'

One of the objectives was to find out how Zimbabweans of foreign origin benefited from the 2000 land reform programme. Respondents echoed different sentiments on the 'New Malawi', which collectively came to a positive conclusion. The first narratives were from the respondents who benefited through attaining land at the 'New Malawi'. The respondents felt really honoured by the fact that while they were of foreign origin, there was no discrimination due to the fact that the allocation of the A2 farm specifically targeted miners from Jessie Mine and Colleen Bawn, in which it is an undisputable notion that most mining areas are dominated by people of foreign origin. Thus, the allocation of the A2 farm to specifically solve the space issues in mining areas came in handy, especially considering the fact that most people from the two mining areas had no places they called home, especially after retirement or retrenchment. Thus, the occupants of the 'New Malawi' appreciated the government's move as it has changed the lives of the citizens in a positive way.

The interviews also sought to find out views of Zimbabweans by origin and birth on how they felt about the area of the 'New Malawi' being dominated by people of foreign origin. In the narrations, the respondents revealed that the 'New Malawi' has brought about a positive change within the surrounding areas as people from Colleen Bawn are able to benefit through the constant supply of food supplies such as maize and milk from the resettled farmers. When asked how they felt about people of foreign origin being allocated land, they revealed that the occupants deserved the land, stating that while most of them were of foreign origin, they were Zimbabweans by birth and some of them took part in the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the narrations revealed that when land was allocated, announcements were made to everyone, in which some people were skeptical about registering for the land because of the then volatile political situation. Most people thought that after having developed the area, the dynamic political situation would work against them and they would have their land taken away from them. Thus, most people played a 'let us wait and see' game. Unfortunately, for those who did not take advantage of the opportunity, there was no more land distribution in the area after the 'New Malawi' allocation.

Respondents also revealed that while the 'New Malawi' residents may have their roots in Malawi, Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique, some of them married Zimbabwean women, therefore attaining Zimbabwean citizenship status. Thus, the conclusions from the narrations reveal that there is a symbiotic relationship between the

beneficiaries of the ‘New Malawi’ and those who are Zimbabweans by both birth and origin.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ‘NEW MALAWI’

The existence of the ‘New Malawi’ has brought about a positive contribution to this area and its surroundings, such as the Jessie Mine and the Colleen Bawn mine, and expressed by the interviewees, there has been a contribution in terms of dairy products such as fresh milk which are sold from the ‘New Malawi’. Furthermore, narrations revealed that there is a cattle sale, which is scheduled to provisionally take place at Colleen Bawn every month. In such a cattle sale, people from the ‘New Malawi’ contribute to the cattle sale in terms of beast provision as well as purchasing. Some interviewees indicated that those who did not benefit from the ‘New Malawi’ scheme – mainly due to the fact that they were reluctant to register – still have an opportunity of at least making arrangements with residents from the ‘New Malawi’ who offer services of keeping their cattle on their behalf. Furthermore, when the planting season comes, invitations are extended to non-residents of the ‘New Malawi’, who participate in what is known as *ilima*, where people come to assist farmers with ploughing with the idea that when harvest time comes, they also get portions of the produce as a reward for their labour. Such arrangements depend on the rainfall.

However, the narrations revealed that most of the challenges being faced at the ‘New Malawi’ are due to issues centering on rainfall levels, which, over the past two years, have been disappointingly low. The last bumper harvest was made in 2011, and in the following years the area has been subjected to drought, respondents further explained. Respondents indicated that if funding for the drilling of boreholes could be availed, villagers would engage in improved irrigation schemes, given that the current irrigation schemes were being done in gardens which are close to the dams, yet the dams are far away from the ‘New Malawi’ residents.

CONCLUSION

The 2000 land reform as approached from the angle of this research was beneficial to the community of Zimbabwe, with the ‘New Malawi’ being a good example. The research of the ‘New Malawi’ took cognisance of people of foreign origin as there was no discrimination in issuing out the land to the people of foreign origin. In actual fact, the distribution of the now New Malawi was specifically targeting people of foreign origin as they dominate the mining areas and they were regarded as people without homes. The ‘New Malawi’ is regarded as a direct reflection of how greatly the villagers appreciate the land distribution as most of the residents faced retirement or retrenchment. Thus, with the ‘New Malawi’, they have managed to get homes for permanent residence as well as a source of livelihood through farming. The envisaged goal for the ‘New Malawi’ residents is to contribute to the national food basket through highly productive

agricultural activities, which, with adequate rain and seeds, the residents are willing to work towards reaching greater heights in farming.

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